WHO SCREWED UP THE ECONOMY? KUTTNER AND REICH DUKE IT OUT | ROBERT FARLEY: IT'S TIME TO ABOLISH THE AIR FORCE | OUR FALL BOOKS ISSUE

THE AMERICAN PROSPECT

LIBERAL INTELLIGENCE

NOVEMBER 2007



THE REVOLT OF THE COMIC BOOKS

BY JULIAN SANCHEZ

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THE AMERICAN PROSPECT

WWW.PROSPECT.ORG VOLUME 18 • NUMBER 11 NOVEMBER 2007

"We have met the enemy and he is us."

—WALT KELLY IN *POGO*

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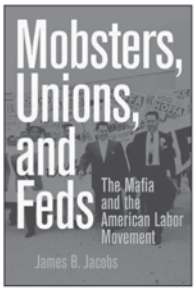
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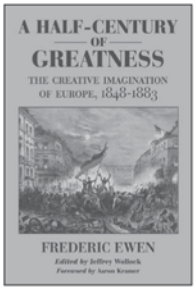
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The Iran Wedge

NOW IS THE SEASON OF REPUBLICAN LETHARGY AND discontent. A wave of retirements is dimming GOP congressional prospects, while the Republican presidential candidates have generated so little excitement that they are running behind the Democrats in fundraising and in the opinion polls. But there is one cheerful possibility on the horizon, and that is war with Iran.

Until recently, I had thought that an attack on Iran, besides being strategically reckless for America, would be politically suicidal for the Republican Party. I am still convinced an attack would be reckless for the country, but I am beginning to see how it could work for the GOP.

That the Bush administration might launch an airstrike to destroy Iran's nuclear facilities has for some time been the subject of intense speculation. During recent months, however, the administration has increasingly emphasized the claim that Iran is arming insurgents in Iraq. In the Oct. 8 issue of *The New Yorker*, Seymour Hersh reports that instead of targeting nuclear sites, a strike would now focus on Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps, which is allegedly responsible for U.S. casualties in Iraq. The attack would then be justified not as counterproliferation, but as counterterrorism. According to Hersh's sources, the president has indicated that he supports such an attack but has yet to issue the order to carry it out.

Hersh's only reference to domestic political fallout assumes that an attack would hurt the GOP. He quotes an unnamed former intelligence official as saying that "Cheney et al." are so determined "to bring military action to Iran as soon as possible" that they are ignoring Republican electoral concerns: "Cheney doesn't give a rat's ass about the Republican worries, and neither does the president."

May I say a word in the vice president's defense? I believe that he does care a rat's ass. The whole idea of the attack makes more sense as an attempt to revive the political dynamics that worked so well for the Republicans in 2002 and 2004, when they turned public anxiety about Islamist terrorism to their advantage, while dividing the Democrats and throwing them on the defensive and off their own issues. An attack on Iran could do the same.

We can already see how the politics might play out. On Sept. 26, the Senate adopted a resolution presented by Joseph Lieberman and Jon Kyl declaring Iran's Revolutionary Guard to be a terrorist organization. The vote was 76-22, with Democrats splitting almost exactly down the middle (Hillary Clinton and Harry Reid were among the supporters). The resolution passed only because its sponsors took out two paragraphs approving a military response, but Democrats split over the suspicion that the resolution might be used to justify one.

Attacking Iran would be reckless for the country but still might work for the GOP.

The precipitating occasion for an initial strike against Iran might be a murky episode along the lines of the Tonkin Gulf incident in the Vietnam War. A U.S. attack on Revolutionary Guard facilities would almost certainly not go unanswered. Iran has the capacity to strike back against American targets not only in Iraq, but throughout the world. As Zbigniew Brzezinski told Hersh, "The name of our game seems to be to get the Iranians to overplay their hand."

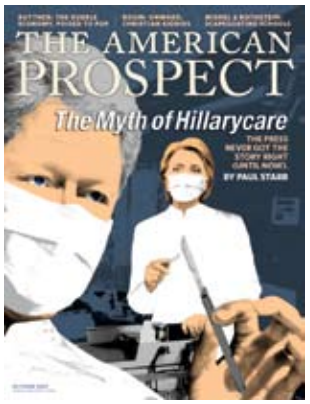
In the wake of an Iranian response—imagine a terrorist attack in an American city—there would be a public clamor for U.S. retaliation. That clamor might then allow an all-out attack against Iran's nuclear sites, which is what I assume Bush and Cheney are really after.

Such a sequence of events, while not without political risks to the Republicans, could wreak havoc on the Democrats. If Iran's response took substantial American casualties, it would generate overwhelming pressure to support U.S. retaliation. The crisis might also accentuate public anxieties about a woman as president at a point when Sen. Clinton may have locked up the nomination. And if the GOP's cards really fall into place, a third-party antiwar presidential campaign might allow the Republican candidate to win in 2008 with only a plurality of the vote. Unless the Democratic nominee handles the crisis brilliantly, it could radically change prospects for the election.

To be sure, an American attack could boomerang. It might strengthen the Iranian regime by generating a nationalist reaction within the country, cast the regime in a heroic light throughout the Islamic world, unleash a wave of terrorism against the United States, aggravate our difficulties in Iraq, and entangle us in a regional war indefinitely. Some analysts think these risks to both the republic and the Republican Party are so great that George Bush will ultimately decline to order an attack. But the Republicans are playing a very weak hand, and this may be their best gamble to retain power. **TAP**

— PAUL STARR

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Health Care: Go Long

PAUL STARR PRESENTED an excellent overview ["The Hillarycare Mythology," October 2007] of the 1993–1994 struggle for national health insurance. He is probably seriously in error, however, in concluding that universal health-care coverage for children would constitute a major victory in 2009–2010.

If a Democrat narrowly wins the presidency, and the Democrats only gain a few more House seats and a Senate seat or two, then Starr is right. Moreover, the universal health-care coverage for children "fallback position" should be pushed early enough to be passed.

If, however, the Democratic candidate wins with 53-plus percent of the vote, and the Democrats also pick up 10 or more House seats and four or five Senate seats, Starr's strategy would constitute a significant error. While there would be fewer Congressional Democrats than in 1993, Congress overall would be ideologically more liberal. Moreover, winning on a clear health plan and winning a clear majority of the vote (Clinton took 43 percent of the vote in 1993) would give the new president more clout and a clearer mandate than Clinton ever had.

LEONARD ROBINS
Professor Emeritus
Roosevelt University
Chicago, IL

Medicare, Anyone?

STARR'S ARTICLE BRINGS up considerations not only of the past—and the perfectly routine stupidity of the press—but of the future. When we read the phrase "universal coverage based on consumer choice among competing private health plans," we realize yet again that the likely Democratic presidential candidate is, in this respect, well to the right of conservative parties in all other advanced nations.

Yet, we in the United States already have a single-payer health-care plan that preserves freedom of choice and functions very well. It is called Medicare, and its gradual extension to the entire population will solve many of our health-care problems while saving the enormous amounts of money now going to insurance companies for no services rendered.

DONALD MINTZ
Trumansburg, NY

Tending the Hedges

THE EXCELLENT SUMMARY of the current financial crisis by Robert Kuttner ["The Bubble Economy," October 2007] is marred by a few misstatements regarding the hedge-fund industry.

Kuttner writes that in the collapse of the LTCM hedge fund, the Federal Reserve leaned on big banks to buy the fund outright, liquidate its positions, and "eat about $4 billion in losses." This is a serious misstatement. The $4 billion in losses took place prior to the Fed's action and were borne entirely by the investors in LTCM (exactly where they belonged). The Fed did pressure the banks to buy the fund outright and liquidate its positions, and the banks were required to invest about $3.6 billion in the fund to assure against further losses, but the actual unwind did not eat into any of this added investment.

The assertion that hedge funds represent "financial middlemen unproductively extracting wealth from the real economy" needs some analysis to support it. Arbitrage activities that help reduce pricing anomalies in the financial markets can contribute to more productive allocation of investment in the real economy. To what extent they actually do is an empirical issue.

STEVEN ALLEN
New York, NY

Bob Kuttner replies: At the time the banks succumbed to the Fed's pressure to buy the hedge fund, it was not at all clear how much of the loss would be recouped. And yes, some derivatives may improve market functioning, but many add risk that is disproportionate to benefit.

Letters to the editor should be sent to letters@prospect.org or mailed to The Editors, The American Prospect, 2000 L St., NW, Suite 717, Washington, D.C. 20036.

FROM THE EXECUTIVE EDITOR

WHEN THE LIBERALS AND THE LITERATI AND HOLLYWOOD all come out against the Bush administration's assaults on liberty and individual rights, that's not news. But when the superheroes of America's comic books hurl their superpowers against the White House for its attacks on our constitutional rights, that's something else—a sign that the rage against Bushism has penetrated a pillar of popular culture, in both its underground elite publications and its patriotic mainstream. In this issue, critic Julian Sanchez documents the great comic-book uprising, while noting that superheroes aren't an easy fit in any theory of democracy or popular rule.

Elsewhere in this issue, two of the *Prospect*'s founders, Robert Kuttner and Robert Reich, each the author of a new book on the political economy, argue the question of who's responsible for the economic transformations of the past 30 years. Are corporate and financial elites to blame (that's Kuttner's position) or are they just the shameless beneficiaries of technological revolutions and globalization (that's Reich's)? John B. Judis contends that in matters of foreign and military policy, President Bush not only repudiates the multilateralism of Wilson, FDR, Truman, et al., but, in a stunningly dubious achievement, resurrects the imperialism of William McKinley. And Robert Farley surveys the achievements of the U.S. Air Force and asks: Who needs it? Superheroes, *si*; strategic bombing, no, in this month's *Prospect*.

— HAROLD MEYERSON

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Up Front



PINLESS CURES

On a campaign stop in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, a television news reporter asked Barack Obama why he doesn't wear an American flag pin. Obama replied that such doodads have become a substitute for "true patriotism." "Instead," he told the newscaster, "I'm going to try to tell the American people what I believe will make this country great, and hopefully that will be a testament to my patriotism."

But here's the scandal: Obama's not the only pin-evader in the presidential field. An exhaustive *Prospect* investigation has revealed that a clear majority of our presidential aspirants have been photographed multiple times not wearing their American flag lapel pins. Sam Brownback isn't wearing one in the photo on the cover of his book, *From Power to Purpose*, and a member of his campaign staff confided to a Fox News reporter that he wasn't even sure if Sen. Brownback had one on all his suit jackets.

Even Rudy Giuliani, whose campaign platform seems to be constructed entirely of American flag pins, has been found not to wear a pin during the entire third of his life spent sleeping, showering, grooming, and cross-dressing. We're pushing for standard-issue flag nipple rings for the true patriot when a suit jacket just isn't appropriate.

THIRD-PARTY POSSIBILITIES

Following special secret side discussions at the special secret conservative Council for National Policy meeting in Salt Lake City in late September, conservative Christian leaders announced that they would consider running a third-party candidate should a pro-choice candidate (read: Rudy Giuliani) win the Republican nomination next year. Ever eager to help start-up political ventures, the *Prospect* herewith offers our own list of suitable alternative candidates:

- Pope John Paul II: in transition between papacy and sainthood, has great name recognition, appeal to swing Catholics. Bonus Point: won't squawk if campaign goes negative.
- Ann Coulter: could contest women's vote with Hillary. Downside: questions women's right to vote. Could make for extremely balanced ticket if runs with John Paul.
- A fetus: Nothing says "pro-life" like the unborn.



SWAPPING NIGHTMARES

Did you know that children whose parents "don't fall in line" to take arms against global warming "are sometimes ostracized" by their little peers? We didn't either, until we got the press release for a new kids' book (ages 8 to 12) entitled *The Sky's NOT Falling: Why It's OK to Chill About Global Warming*. The global warming lobby is now "targeting our kids," warns author Holly Fretwell, who will have to convince us that she wasn't somehow named by Charles Dickens. Indeed, if children need things to fret about (sorry), this book will help them redirect their anxieties to all those "potentially devastating human and economic consequences of politically motivated responses to" global warming. Well—just so they wake up screaming.



BILLBOARD PLANET

What is it that airline passengers long to see as they peer out their portholes for their first-ever glimpse of London, Paris, or New York? But, of course: giant advertising displays! The London-based Ad-Air ad agency is planning to sell display advertising on signs the size of three football fields that will lie flat on the ground along the flight paths of landing and departing planes at some of the world's busiest airports,

ERIC PALMA; LANDOV

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THE QUESTION: HILLARY IS TO "CACKLE" AS ...



"Rudy is to 'I do.'"
—Larry Sabato, *University of Virginia professor of politics, and author of* A More Perfect Constitution

"Biden is to talking and talking and talking and talking."
—Chuck Todd, *political director, NBC News*

"George W. Bush is to invading small countries."
—David Roberts, *staff writer, grist.org*

according to a report in the *Daily Breeze*, a newspaper covering the area around Los Angeles International Airport (LAX). The first such ads are to be rolled out around Dubai's airport this October, and if all goes according to plan, Heathrow, O'Hare, Charles de Gaulle, LAX, and others will soon be similarly encircled. Where the hell is Lady Bird Johnson now that we really need her?

POLICY MADE EASY

The direction of the Chinese Communist Party may seem opaque to us outsiders, but to the party's ideologists, it's simplicity itself. "It is impossible for China to return to the left, because that would mean poverty and backwardness," Huang Weiding, deputy editor of *Seeking Truth*, the party's chief ideological journal, told Edward Cody of *The Washington Post* in early October. "It is also impossible for China to go right, because the country is still too poor and has too many people. Moreover, it is impossible to abandon the leadership of the Communist Party." That doesn't leave much in the way of political options, save to re-elect the party's current leaders, which, as we go to press, is precisely what the party's 17th national congress is poised to do. Anything else would be, well, impossible.

LANDOV; ISTOCKPHOTO

PARODY *by T. A. Frank*



STEVE KROFT: ***Who's the [Anita Hill] you knew?***

CLARENCE THOMAS: ***Well, I think she could defend herself ... she responded very quickly.***

NARRATOR: ***In the book [Clarence Thomas' memoir,*** **My Grandfather's Son*****], he remembers her as an average employee whose behavior could sometimes be irritating, rude, and unprofessional.***

—*60 MINUTES*, "CLARENCE THOMAS: THE JUSTICE NOBODY KNOWS," SEPT. 30, 2007

Sesenta Minutos

THOMAS TORQUEMADA: THE INQUISITOR GENERAL NOBODY KNOWS

NARRATOR: Most Spaniards know very little about the workings of the Inquisition, but mention Thomas Torquemada, and you are likely to start an argument. His supporters say he has brought efficiency to the process of counterheresy. His detractors complain that an excessive number of Moors, Protestants, and Jews have been burned at the stake. Now, 10 years after his appointment as Inquisitor General, he has written a memoir called *My Grandmother's Son*, which lays bare a remarkable life and the events that shaped it. Recently, Torquemada sat down with correspondent Don Stefano Kroft and *Sesenta Minutos* to talk about it all.

TORQUEMADA: There's been an effort over the last 15 years to create this perception of me as angry.

NARRATOR: He is often dismissed as a zealot, a religious fanatic who has brought misery to thousands. The problem with the characterization is that it's unfair and untrue.

TORQUEMADA: My job isn't to respond to such silliness. It's to find Moors and set them ablaze.

NARRATOR: Whether you agree with Torquemada or not, he is thoughtful, provocative, and unpretentious. One of his passions is a 40-foot RV, a horse-drawn recreational carriage he and his wife use to explore the Spanish peninsula with their 50 favorite mounted guards. Torquemada was born in 1420 at Valladolid during the reign of John II, and he was brought up largely by his grandmother, a violent woman given to hearing voices.

KROFT: Do you remember the first things your grandmother said to you?

TORQUEMADA: She said, "It wouldn't hurt so much if you would just stop clawing at the collar."

NARRATOR: After 22 years as the prior of the convent of Santa Cruz, Torquemada learned that the King and Queen of Spain had tapped him for the Inquisitorship.

KROFT: You had no illusions about how difficult it was going to be to get confirmed?

TORQUEMADA: I had no idea how bad it would be. I could never have anticipated what took place.

NARRATOR: A former employee of Torquemada's, a stable boy named Juan, testified that his boss had come on to him before trying to bury him alive.

TORQUEMADA: The allegations were a weapon to destroy me, clear and simple. He was not the demure stable boy that they portrayed. That's not the person I knew.

KROFT: Who's the person you knew?

TORQUEMADA: Well, he could defend himself. He responded very quickly.

KROFT: Were you angry?

TORQUEMADA: A bit. I later had his head severed and mounted on the church door.

NARRATOR: He has expressed his religious views in more than 10,000 written death sentences, but he rarely opens his mouth during oral inquisition.

KROFT: The perception is, the critics will say it's because you're a madman with no questions that make any sense.

TORQUEMADA: [Laughs] Whoever says that, I'll find them.

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The Moral Equivalent of Optimism

BY MARK SCHMITT

YOU MAY HAVE NOTICED A RECURRING THEME IN this column: that there is a set of assumptions about political possibilities that date from the late 1970s and have led to the timidity of more recent liberal politics—and that are overdue for questioning.

Here's another: An unfinished challenge from the late 1970s involves the question of how to create a meaningful and successful politics suitable to what then-California Gov. Jerry Brown called "the era of limits." In that first moment when the U.S. confronted the finitude both of fossil fuels and of America's postwar economic hegemony, Brown and Jimmy Carter each sized up the challenge and took a feeble swing at it—Carter with his inaccurately labeled 1979 "Malaise Speech," and Brown with a spacey politics derived in part from E.F. Schumacher's book, *Small is Beautiful*. Carter's speech did not stem the disintegration of his administration, and Ronald Reagan's victory the next year has been viewed ever since as proof that optimism is always a winning formula. Successful liberal politicos since 1980 have sought to avoid the Carter trap and to follow instead the sunny Reaganite path, albeit to another destination.

But Carter and Brown weren't selling the eat-your-spinach politics of, say, Paul Tsongas' dreary 1992 focus on the deficit and entitlements. Rather, Carter was attempting—as in the 1977 speech in which, quoting William James, Carter called for "the moral equivalent of war, except that we will be uniting our efforts to build and not destroy"—to recapture a politics in which a deep commitment to national purpose would be a unifying cause. Carter combined John F. Kennedy's call to peacetime service with the aspirational language for which that first Kennedy inaugural is remembered.

Reagan, the easy optimist, got lucky. The energy crisis faded, and the economy rebounded in time for his "Morning in America" re-election in 1984. But here we are again, with energy and climate change at the front of the agenda and unlikely to go away, with the deindustrialization of the economy that began in the 1970s now nearly complete, and, instead of 52 hostages, with 169,000 U.S. troops stuck in a Middle Eastern country with no easy way out. If ever we needed a robust politics of national commitment and shared sacrifice, it is now.

Meanwhile, the political right has descended into double caricature, torn between a millenarian pessimism in which "people who want to kill us" lurk around every corner (for them, the only moral equivalent of war is war itself), and a cockeyed, vacuous attempt to reincarnate Reagan's boosterism. Conservatives oscillate between endless war and endless tax cuts, seeing no contradiction.

Yet despite the opportunity offered by this laughable dead end of the Reagan tradition, liberal politics is still paralyzed between a small-bore, problem-solving, appeal-to-the-middle-class approach to government (Sen. Hillary Clinton's well-crafted health plan, for example, whose main selling point has been that there's nothing to be afraid of), and the grand, dark, and dutiful mission of, say, Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth*. Liberals oscillate between modest appeals to self-interest and gargantuan appeals to global obligation.

In this confusion, it's a propitious moment to revisit those failed 1970s' attempts to combine the aspiration for a better future with a sense of shared commitment and engagement in building that future, and this time, to get it right. Thus the relevance of Michael Shellenberger's and Ted Nordhaus' new book, *Break Through*. As the authors of the essay, "The Death of Environmentalism," they are old hands at riling environmentalists, and their advocacy of a job-creating strategy of huge investments in new technology to counter climate change has been met with the predictable attack that climate change can't wait for such niceties. As a matter of science, the critics may have a point, but the burden is on them to show how a call for sacrifice to avoid crisis can succeed politically absent a promise, not just of avoiding disaster, but of an even better future. Shellenberger and Nordhaus demonstrate that America's greatest moments of collective action have come not in response to dire warnings of crisis or dark panic, but at moments of prosperity and optimism. In the great essay, "Economic Possibilities for Our Grandchildren," John Maynard Keynes wrote that it is when people have less worry about their own economic condition that "the nature of one's duty to one's neighbor is changed" for the better.

Liberals oscillate between modest appeals to self-interest and gargantuan appeals to global obligation.

As the indifferent, disengaged optimism of Reagan runs its course, perhaps we will be able to reignite the flame of that more engaged and passionate optimism, inherent in the liberal tradition from James to Keynes, that has been shelved since 1980. TAP

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Eyes Wide Open

BY GARANCE FRANKE-RUTA

SOMEWHERE ON THE ROAD TO A "JOHN EDWARDS FOR President" event at a middle school in an Iowa Mississippi River community, I took a wrong turn. This set me cruising along a battered Main Street before turning into a neighborhood of bedraggled clapboard residences in the declining industrial town of Keokuk, population 11,500. A gaunt, elderly woman sat on a porch and watched me turn my car around, her white hair yellowed with age and pulled into a tight bun, her housedress loose around her wrinkled, skinny arms. On the main avenue, the store signs looked like they hadn't been updated since her youth. Some shops were shuttered. It was like a Detroit in miniature, but crossed with a dusty Western town of cinematic lore.

Located in what Des Moines sophisticates call the armpit of Iowa, Keokuk is wedged between Illinois and Missouri on a spit of land heading south off the bottom of Iowa's flat border into the triangle where the mighty Mississippi meets its tributary Iowa River. The massive changes our economy has undergone—from heavy manufacturing to today's 80 percent service sector—has left scars across this strip of land. There, for the Edwards' campaign event, a message of economic populism and skepticism of globalization seemed as natural a fit as the hawks that coasted overhead.

A team of documentary photographers had followed Edwards on his trip. But to really understand his campaign, and why he's remained strong in Iowa, you have to turn the cameras around.

"All the river communities in Iowa, it's pretty much industry [that had been the base], and it's tough in these areas economically," Keokuk Chief of Police Thomas L. Crew explained after Edwards finished his pitch. "Overall our population is declining."

The town's steel plant is gone, Crew explained. The grain milling facility now produces corn syrup for a French firm. The automotive parts manufacturer that used to supply General Motors now supplies an Italian company. "All of those things have cut back," he said. And those are the ones still open. "They've gone elsewhere. Some of those plants have gone to Mexico, and they've gone to China and other places."

The big plant outside of town that used to produce trailer truck beds is a rare success story, having been taken over by German electronics firm Siemens to produce blades for wind generators, part of the small but growing local non-ethanol green energy sector. Up the river in Burlington, once the capital of the Iowa Territory, retiree Jan Elschlager pleaded with Edwards after he spoke: "We need high-paying jobs to keep the children here. ... We need high-paying jobs, not just small jobs."

Edwards speaks for a part of America that cannot be seen from the office towers of the coasts.

Edwards, son of a mill worker, is running as the candidate of the places like these, the places time forgot. His challenge, though, in defending a vanishing way of life—and it was a very good way of life, as I learned at an Ankeny cookout I attended with a unionized John Deere welder whose high school education and more than two decades on the job now put him in the range of a $75,000 salary in an environment where three-bedroom homes can still be had for $200,000—is that he himself left it behind more than 30 years ago.

In 2004, Edwards won the counties in the Des Moines media market, while John Kerry swept these declining rural hamlets. This cycle, Edwards is targeting them hard. Still, it's been difficult for some to reconcile Edwards' $6 million home with his wife's claim that people like the aged farmers with arthritic knees he meets by the Mississippi River are his folk.

And yet in judging Edwards, it's worth recalling Aristotle's conception of virtue, which lies not in our beliefs or intentions, but in the habits and practices that make up our days. Edwards has spent his recent years marching with unions and advocating for economic justice, so that those lucky union employees I met in Iowa could continue to live in placid, well-mown communities, and those unlucky ones struggling with their small jobs at awful chain stores could hope to again live in vibrant communities where young people want to stay.

Edwards may not win the nomination, and he hasn't even won the hearts of the Iowa working class—an October *Des Moines Register* poll found Hillary Clinton winning union households—but he has become, nonetheless, the nation's most important spokesman for a part of America that cannot be seen from the office towers of the coasts, or even those of downtown Des Moines. No matter what happens in Iowa in January, I hope he'll continue to speak up for that America, and help teach others to turn the camera around. TAP

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Bush's Neo-Imperialist War

Our Iraqi occupation not only rejects American foreign policy since Wilson, it's a throwback to the great power imperialism that led to World War I.

BY JOHN B. JUDIS

IN 1882 THE BRITISH OCCUPIED EGYPT. ALTHOUGH THEY claimed they would withdraw their troops, the British remained, they said, at the request of the khedive, the ruler they had installed. The *U.S. Army Area Handbook* aptly describes the British decision to stay:

> At the outset of the occupation, the British government declared its intention to withdraw its troops as soon as possible. This could not be done, however, until the authority of the khedive was restored. Eventually, the British realized that these two aims were incompatible because the military intervention, which Khedive Tawfiq supported and which prevented his overthrow, had undermined the authority of the ruler. Without the British presence, the khedival government would probably have collapsed.

The British would remain in Egypt for 70 years until Gamel Abdel Nasser's nationalist revolt tossed them out. They would grant Egypt nominal independence in 1922, but in order to maintain their hold over the Suez Canal, the gateway to British India and Asia, they would retain control over Egypt's finances and foreign policy.

On Sept. 13, 2007, George W. Bush issued his report to the nation on the progress of "the surge" in Iraq. Echoing the British in Egypt, he promised "a reduced American presence" in Iraq, but he added ominously that "Iraqi leaders from all communities ... understand that their success will require U.S. political, economic, and security engagement that extends beyond my presidency. These Iraqi leaders have asked for an *enduring relationship* with America. And we are ready to begin building that relationship—in a way that protects our interests in the region and requires many fewer American troops." (Emphasis mine.) In other words, Iraqi leaders who owe their positions to the U.S. occupation want the Americans to stay indefinitely, and Bush is ready to oblige them, albeit with a smaller force.

British Prime Minister William Gladstone insisted in 1882 that the British would not make Egypt a colony. He wanted, his private secretary recorded, "to give scope to Egypt for the Egyptians were this feasible and attainable without risk." But that appeared too risky, and Egypt quickly became part of the British Empire. Bush, too, has insisted that the United States is not engaged in imperialism. America is not "an imperial power," but a "liberating power," he has declared. But Bush's denial rings as hollow as Gladstone's. What Bush has done in Iraq, rather than what he says he has done, is to revive an imperialist foreign policy, reminiscent of the British and French in the Middle East, and of the kind that the United States practiced briefly under William McKinley and Theodore Roosevelt.

Bush's foreign policy has been variously described as unilateralist, militarist, and hyper-nationalist. But the term that fits it best is imperialist. That's not because it is the most incendiary term, but because it is the most historically accurate. Bush's foreign policy was framed as an alternative to the liberal internationalist policies that Woodrow Wilson espoused and that presidents from Franklin D. Roosevelt to Bill Clinton tried to put into effect as an alternative to the imperialist strategies that helped cause two world wars and even the Cold War. Bush's foreign policy represents a return not to the simple unilateralism of 19th-century American foreign policy, but to the imperial strategy that the great powers of Europe—and, for a brief period, America, too—followed and that resulted in utter disaster.

There have been empires since the dawn of history, but the term "imperialism," and its modern practice, originated in the late 19th century. During that time, Britain and the major European powers struggled to carve up the less developed world into colonies, protectorates, and spheres of influence. The new empires spawned during this period didn't consist of "settler colonies" like the original American colonies or Australia, but indigenous possessions like British India or French Indochina. The United States got into the great game in 1898 when, after successfully ousting Spain from Cuba and the Pacific, the McKinley administration, prodded by Theodore Roosevelt and Henry Cabot Lodge, decided to annex the Philippines.

There were two kinds of imperial rule: direct, where the colonial power assigned an administrator—a viceroy or proconsul—who ran the country directly; and indirect, where the colonial power used its financial and military power to prop up a native administration that did its bidding and to prevent the rise of governments that did not. The latter kind

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of imperial rule was developed by the United States in Cuba in 1901 after Roosevelt's Secretary of War Elihu Root realized that direct rule could bring war and rebellion, as it had done, to the McKinley administration's surprise, in the Philippines. The British later adopted this kind of imperial rule in Egypt and Iraq.

The impetus for the growth of empires in the 19th century was economic. Britain and the imperial powers sought secure access to raw materials, including rubber, cotton, and foodstuffs—oil would come later—and to outlets for capital investment in railroads and other major projects. As their colonial investments grew, they tried to erect an international system of islands and port facilities and canals that could protect their trade routes. (The U.S. originally saw the Philippines as a stepping stone to the lucrative Chinese market.) But the impetus wasn't only economic. By the early 20th century, as the countries strove to divide up the globe, the acquisition of colonies became a source of national power and prestige, and acquired its own elaborate and malignant ideological justification. It gained a life of its own.

This growth of imperialism eventually created the conditions for its undoing. By encouraging not merely trade rivalry, but growing competition for national power—epitomized in the pre–World War I naval arms race between Britain and Germany—imperialism helped spawn wars among the great powers themselves. The rivalry between top dog England and challenger Germany, and between Germany and Austria, on the one hand, and France and Russia, on the other, contributed to the outbreak of World War I. The Second World War also represented, among other things, an attempt by the Axis powers, a subordinate group of capitalist nations, to redivide the world at the expense of the U.S., Great Britain, France, and the USSR. And the Cold War stemmed from the attempt by the Soviet Union, one of the most vocal critics of Western imperialism, to fulfill the imperial dreams of Czarist Russia by expanding westward and to the south.

In addition, the system of imperialism spawned nationalist and anti-imperialist movements in the colonies themselves. Some of these movements, particularly in the Middle East, had a religious coloration. Others took their ideology from Soviet or Chinese communism or from the Wilsonian vision of national self-determination. These movements made it difficult, and finally impossible, for the imperial powers to maintain their control.

In the United States, Woodrow Wilson came to realize the pitfalls of imperialism not only from the six-year war with the Filipino rebels and Wilson's own unsuccessful intervention in Mexico in 1914, but also from the outbreak of World War I, which Wilson privately blamed on imperial rivalry.



STEVE BRODNER

After World War I, Wilson set out to create new international arrangements to replace those of imperialism. Wilson sought an agreement among the great powers through the League of Nations to prevent new conquests and wars over conquests. He wanted to phase out the existing imperialism through "mandates" that would put countries, and groups of countries, that had no vested interest in acquiring colonies in charge of assisting colonies in making the transition to self-government. And Wilson favored economic agreements to ease conflicts over access to markets and raw materials.

Wilson didn't think the United States should abandon the leadership role it acquired at the end of World War I. But he wanted the United States to exercise it through international institutions that could ensure a peaceful world in which the United States would not have to prepare perpetually for war

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and in which America's vaunted economic superiority could come to the fore. Wilson failed to win over his European counterparts and the Republicans at home. But during and after World War II, Franklin Roosevelt and Harry Truman attempted to put Wilson's liberal internationalism into practice. It was embodied not only in the U.N., but in the IMF, World Bank, and GATT agreements, and in America's multilateral approach to the Cold War.

Roosevelt had planned to force Britain and France to divest themselves of their empires—the new U.N. had a "trusteeship" system for that purpose—but American resolve was blunted by the onset of the Cold War. Faced with Soviet support for anti-imperialist movements in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, the United States sided with the former colonial powers. That policy came to a disastrous culmination in the Vietnam war, which was an outgrowth of American support for French colonialism. The American defeat in Vietnam dealt a fatal blow to U.S. attempts to prop up the Western imperialism. Subsequently, Portugal's colonies in Africa gained their independence. That left only the Soviet empire. When it collapsed in the early 1990s, the age of empire was over.

There were still colonies and quasi-colonies like Chechnya or Tibet, but they were contested extensions of the larger power itself. Some political scientists in the United States and Europe claimed that America remained an imperial power because of its worldwide system of military bases and its clout in international financial institutions, but while America was capable of influencing governments, it could no longer exercise a veto over critical regimes coming to power. The invasion of Panama in 1989 appeared to be the last gasp of America's indirect imperialism.

Indeed, the 1990s became a high water mark of liberal internationalism. George H.W. Bush's administration built a coalition through the U.N. to drive Iraq out of Kuwait. Acting through NATO, the Clinton administration built a coalition to end the wars in Bosnia and Kosovo and to oversee the transition to a peaceful breakup of former Yugoslavia. The United States also took leadership in the formation of the World Trade Organization—which, whatever its imperfections, was designed to prevent the kind of rival trade blocs that could eventually lead to war. At Maastricht, Western Europe, once the center of imperial rivalry, became a model of post-imperial integration. And the world's nations seemed on the verge of agreeing to a new set of accords, including the Kyoto Protocol, that would address problems Wilson never dreamed of—problems that could not be addressed except through international agreements.

When George W. Bush took office in January 2001, however, his foreign policy echoed not only that of neo-isolationist Republicans like former Majority Leader Dick Armey, but also that of America's foreign policy before we decided in 1898 that we had to get involved in the struggle for empire. That was an America that not only scorned empire but was oblivious to much of the outside world. Bush disdained international organizations. He withdrew the United States from the Kyoto climate treaty and whatever other international agreements had yet to be ratified. He was a unilateralist, but he was reluctant to use America's singular power to affect the governments of other countries. His highest defense priority was the erection of an anti-missile system, the purpose of which was not only to make the United States impregnable from foreign attack, but also to reduce the reliance of the U.S. on other countries for its security.

All that changed after September 11. Bush retained his unilateralism, but he now wedded it to an aggressive strategy for dealing with America's enemies.

In developing a response to September 11, Bush fell under the influence of neo-conservatives in his administration and in Washington policy circles. These neo-conservatives believed



IN IRAQ FOREVER

BY SPENCER ACKERMAN

FOOLISH LIBERALS. JUST DAYS AFTER President Bush announced in January that he would deploy an additional 21,500 troops to Iraq as a temporary "surge," liberals came up with a different buzzword. "Democrats oppose escalation of the war," newly elected House Speaker Nancy Pelosi told a cheering throng of supporters in San Francisco. "Let me repeat that: Democrats oppose escalation of the war." The obvious political gambit was to stoke public dissatisfaction and leverage it to de-escalate the war.

It was a smart choice of words. The public grew increasingly restive over Iraq; "escalation" added an unsubtle reminder of Vietnam. But it didn't work. In September Bush announced that the "surge" would end in the summer of 2008. He portrayed himself as a stern commander in chief who would de-escalate the war "on success." And he claimed victory in the war was still possible while allowing nervous Republicans to point to the exits.

The Democrats failed on every front. Most obviously, the war goes on; 812 American troops died between Bush's two speeches, along with at least 12,400 Iraqis. Less obviously, even on the margins of congressional debate, anti-war forces lost ground. Every war-funding bill passed without a timetable for withdrawal. Climactic testimony from Gen. David H. Petraeus devolved into a slog over tactics rather than a vivid demonstration that not even a supremely talented general can redeem this war.

Worse yet, buried within Bush's Sept. 13 speech was a belated recognition of the most salient fact of the entire war: Success in Iraq "will require U.S. political, economic, and security engagement that extends beyond my presidency." Bush declared himself "ready to begin ... an enduring relationship." It was a casual declaration of what has been clear for months: The Bush administration is setting the stage for a costly commitment to keep a force in Iraq

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that the United States should use its superior military power to intimidate and overthrow the regimes of "rogue states" like Iraq that challenged American hegemony. (One typical slogan was "rogue state rollback.") The neocons didn't favor colonialism, but believed that by exerting its power the United States could produce regimes that did its bidding. After September 11, they spoke openly of creating a new American empire. "People are now coming out of the closet on the word 'empire,'" *Washington Post* columnist Charles Krauthammer exulted.

The neo-conservatives found common cause with Bush officials, including Vice President Dick Cheney and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, who were concerned about protecting American access to foreign oil in a period of rising demand and stagnating supply. That made them particularly interested in ousting Saddam Hussein, whose government sat atop the third largest oil reserve in the world, and in installing a regime more friendly to the United States.

If there is any lesson to be learned from the 130-year history of imperialism, it is that the natives eventually grow restless.

In the buildup to the war, and during the invasion and occupation, Bush officials, who were eager to advertise Iraq's nuclear threat, were reluctant to talk about oil, but in off-the-record interviews I conducted in December 2002, neo-conservatives waxed poetic about using Iraq's oil wealth to undermine OPEC. After he left office, former Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill recounted National Security Council discussions about Iraqi oil. And in his recently published memoir, Alan Greenspan wrote, "I'm saddened that it is politically inconvenient to acknowledge what everyone knows—the Iraq war is largely about oil."

Bush and other administration officials denied that the United States was trying to create a new empire. But they were less guarded in their private communications. When the White House offered former Sen. Bob Kerrey the job of head of the Provisional Authority in Iraq—the job that eventually went to Paul Bremer—officials asked him if he were interested in being "viceroy." Kerrey, taken aback, turned down the job.

The administration's actions also belied its denials. In March 2004, the *Chicago Tribune* reported that the U.S. Army was constructing what it called 14 "enduring bases" in Iraq. These would provide a continuing American military presence in Iraq. And the administration continues work on these bases, including a new one perched on the Iranian border, even as it professes to be committed to turning Iraq over to its government and army.

Though opposition to the American presence in Iraq has grown both there and in the U.S., Bush's televised address and Gen. David Petraeus' congressional testimony in September made clear that the administration has grown even more determined to remain there. As Spencer Ackerman points out, Bush's promise to stay in Iraq "as long as necessary, not one day longer" has given way to the promise of an "enduring relationship." And American projections of troop presence in Iraq now extend indefinitely into the future. If the administration's experience in Iraq does not parallel that of the British in Egypt, it won't be for lack of trying.

Indeed, this brand of imperialism, as practiced by the Bush administration, is remarkably similar to the older European variety. Its outward veneer is optimistic and even triumphalist, when articulated by a neo-conservative like Max Boot or William

for decades to come, a commitment that will be exceedingly difficult for Bush's successors to abridge or annul.

THE WAR IN IRAQ CAN SOMETIMES FEEL LIKE a military commitment in search of a rationale. Yet there has never been any doubt among insiders that the Bush administration intended Iraq to become an outpost of U.S. power projection throughout the Middle East. "A future Iraq would be a major player in and partner of the U.S. with regard to the U.S.' security strategy and presence in the Middle East," recalls Paul Pillar, who from 2001 until 2006 was the U.S. intelligence community's chief Mideast analyst. "This wasn't going to be just an altruistic endeavor—'we'll overthrow Saddam and then politely bow out.' ... That was never envisioned."

Without clear guidance from the Defense Department about the duration of their stay in Iraq, U.S. military commanders began constructing enormous bases capable of garrisoning numerous brigades for an indefinite period. By last year, four of them had sprung up along strategically important points throughout Iraq: in Balad, Tallil, Rawah, and Baghdad. The complex surrounding Baghdad International Airport resembles a county rather than a military base, comprising five camps connected in an efficient confederation and passable through a system of buses over about 25 square miles.

In other words, Bush's recent statement about an enduring relationship was a belated recognition of long-emerging facts on the ground. In June, Defense Secretary Robert Gates, no great fan of the war, cautioned against seeking a decisive end to the mission. Praising the "Korea model," Gates looked to "a mutually agreed arrangement whereby we have a long and enduring presence." Similarly, Petraeus offered Congress a sketch for reducing troops until five army brigades—15,000 to 25,000 soldiers—remain. In a little-noticed bit of testimony, Petraeus also said the government of Nouri al-Maliki has indicated that after 2008 it would like to "negotiate a long-term security agreement," known as a Status of Forces Agreement. A SOFA is the basic pact establishing the legal terms of garrisoning U.S. forces overseas for the long haul. In September, the Congressional Budget Office estimated, conservatively, that an indefinite presence would cost between $4 billion and $10 billion annually. *(continued next page)*

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Kristol, and is usually accompanied by a vision of global moral-religious-social transformation. The British boasted of bringing Christianity and civilization to the heathens; America's neo-conservatives trumpet the virtues of free-market capitalism and democracy. And like the older imperialism, Bush's policy toward Iraq and the Middle East has been driven by a fear of losing out on scarce natural resources. Ultimately, his policy is as much a product of the relative decline of American power brought about by the increasingly fierce international competition for resources and markets as it is of America's "unipolar moment."

Bush sought privileged access to Iraq's oil, sparking a new oil diplomacy in which nations use oil wealth as a political weapon.

Bush and Cheney were hardly unique in worrying about the dwindling supply of oil. Bush's father and Bill Clinton also worried about it. But George H.W. Bush and Clinton acted on the premise that petroleum and natural gas were international commodities to which any purchaser should have access. Oil companies, which pressed for the removal of sanctions on Iraq and Iran, shared this view. When the elder Bush and Clinton sought to prevent Iraq from monopolizing the region's oil—and using it as a political instrument—they did so through the United Nations.

But George W. Bush has differed from his predecessors in both his concerns and his methods. Bush, prodded by Cheney, sought to win privileged access to Iraq's oil—not necessarily for any particular company (although Cheney clearly wanted a role for Halliburton in building Iraq's oil infrastructure), but for American producers and consumers in general. That is similar to the strategy of the older imperial powers. And the method they employed was unilateral invasion—oh yes, with the support of Britain, the former great imperial power in the region.

Bush's imperial strategy is sparking a new phase in oil diplomacy, where oil consumers like China are trying to lock up long-term deals with countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, and where the producers—notably at this point Venezuela—are beginning to use their oil wealth as a political weapon. The eventual outcome—if this rivalry is not regulated through new international agreements—could be the kind of tension that gave rise to World War I.

As the war in Iraq has turned into a quagmire, neo-conservatives who had goaded the president into action have blamed the war's failure on the administration's flawed strategy. They have propounded a series of "if only's": If only the administration had sent more troops, if only it had not disbanded the Ba'ath army, if only it had handed the leadership of Iraq over immediately to con man Ahmed Chalabi. Of these, only the addition of more troops might have quelled the insurgency, and then only temporarily. If there is any lesson from the 130-year history of imperialism, it is that the natives eventually grow restless. Since World War II, the peoples of the Middle East, Asia, and Africa have been throwing off rather than welcoming foreign control.

The Middle East, where Muslims still blanch at the Crusades and later British and French attempts to divide and rule, is particularly sensitive to outside attempts at domination. Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda didn't spring from Mecca but from the battlefield in Afghanistan, from resentment of American support for Israel and of American bases on Arab soil. Bush's

(continued from page 21) The number of Iraqis who want U.S. troops in their country indefinitely is statistically insignificant, according to a September poll conducted by ABC News and the BBC. But as long as Iraqis fear for their lives and the Iraqi government fears for its hold on power, a coterie of Iraqi officials is likely to seek a U.S. security guarantee. "Beyond the immediate term ... we'll need a continuing U.S. presence, and that is a period where a SOFA will be essential," explains Rend al-Rahim Francke, Iraq's ambassador to the U.S. during Iyad Allawi's interim government. While she is uncomfortable with an indefinite U.S. deployment, she adds, "The U.S. has a long-term presence in Qatar, Bahrain, and Oman, and this presence has not been questioned."

The assumption made by advocates of an enduring U.S. presence in Iraq is that the U.S. can improve security to the point where a reduced American presence would no longer be provocative to Iraqis. American advisers in Iraq, says one senior U.S. Army officer with extensive experience there, "can be as uncontroversial as their role in other parts of the world ... American combat forces are not going to win the war in Iraq. Full stop. I believe it can be won with Iraqi security forces, and we can increase the chance of that happening with some number of American combat advisers."

Yet the experience of the last four years suggests that anger at the U.S. presence is a durable commodity both in and out of Iraq. "Any extended U.S. force presence, even a reduced one, clearly validates the al-Qaeda storyline," says Jeffrey Record, a professor of strategy at the Air War College in Alabama. "Every Arab Tom, Dick, and Harry who wants to express outrage at this crusader intrusion into the Arab heartland is going to go after those forces, as we are seeing now." If so, that renders Petraeus' draw-down plan untenable: Five Army brigades is too large a force to merely monitor Iraqi forces, as Petraeus' plan envisioned, yet it's vastly too small to make a difference if those Iraqi forces are overwhelmed.

The U.S. has real interests in Iraq—ensuring a stable flow of oil, preventing a regional conflagration, and arresting the spread of al-Qaeda, among others. Yet the U.S. presence in Iraq has consistently proven counterproductive to its aims. American interests, says Paul Pillar, are "not served enough to a degree that out-

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policy in the region has reflected a profound ignorance of this history. Wrote former National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski in January 2007, "America is acting like a colonial power in Iraq. But the age of colonialism is over. Waging a colonial war in the post-colonial age is self-defeating."

What, then, should the United States be doing in Iraq and elsewhere to repair the damage wrought by Bush's exercise in neo-imperialism? On one level, this is an enormously complicated question that is beyond my capacity to answer. But on a simple, much less specific level, the answer is obvious: A new administration has to repudiate Bush's policy of imperialism and reaffirm America's commitment to liberal internationalism. That will entail at least these three kinds of initiatives:

- The new administration needs to repudiate Bush's strategy of preemptive regime change and reaffirm the United Nations charter, which allows nations to act unilaterally only in their own immediate self-defense. That would have an immediate effect on American policy toward Iran, whose regime the United States is now officially trying to overthrow.
- The new administration needs to reaffirm the idea behind internationally sanctioned and administered "mandates" and "trusteeship" for countries and peoples going through a difficult transition toward independence and statehood. If countries intervene to prevent war or genocide, they must do so in a manner that assures the peoples targeted that their right of self-determination will be respected. If the United States, for instance, had tried to intervene in the Balkans by itself, it might still be fighting an insurgency there.
- The new administration needs to reaffirm the importance of international action and agreements—through the U.N. and other bodies—to aid in the prevention of wars, pandemics, and environmental catastrophe, and to ease the struggle over scarce resources, including oil and water. That means at a minimum returning to the negotiations over global warming; and attempting to revive the Non-Proliferation Treaty, which the U.S. undermined in signing a nuclear deal with India.

But what about Iraq? Should the U.S. withdraw immediately? Should it leave a rump force in place to fight international terrorists? These questions—now at the forefront of the debate in Washington—are secondary to questions of diplomacy. A new administration should declare the invasion and occupation of Iraq a mistake and pledge to remove American troops from the country. It should not do so, however, with any hope of ending the civil war there, but rather of gaining international support for a "trusteeship" that would guide Iraq back toward genuine self-government and independence. The U.S. can contribute financially, but it will have to take a subordinate role in any international peace-keeping force that enters the country.

None of this will be easy. At this point, the Bush administration might have dug such a huge hole in the region that nothing the United States does will prevent more war and greater chaos. But it is certain that the Bush administration will not change course, and, equally, that a new administration will enjoy a honeymoon not only with American voters, but with the rest of the world in which it could advance a new foreign policy that breaks decisively with that of the Bush administration. If it doesn't do this—if it equivocates and seeks half-measures, or if it tries (as some Republican candidates threaten) to reinforce the American occupation—then its actions will not lead to an enduring relationship with the Iraqis and the peoples of the Middle East, but to an enduring nightmare. **TAP**

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We Need Him on That Wall? U.S. troops stand guard at a Shiite-Sunni meeting southwest of Baghdad, September 2007.

weighs the negatives of our presence: continuing Iraqi casualties, the image of the U.S. occupying a foreign land unjustly, and U.S. troops being caught in the crossfire."

Perversely, Bush, in his final months in office, operates according to the political logic of an Iraqi insurgent: He wins by not obviously losing. It's unclear whether the Democrats have an effective response. According to Jim Manley, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid's spokesman, the strategy over the coming year will be to relentlessly schedule war-related legislation until, closer to the election, Republicans yield to "a real change in policy, including bringing our troops home as quickly as possible."

But how many of them will actually come home is another open question. So far, the major Democratic presidential contenders have only pledged to bring home combat forces, while they equivocate on a residual presence. Manley suggests that Bush's plans for Iraq amount to little more than "just leaving it for the next president to deal with." If Bush can hold the line on Iraq through 2008, he'll have gone a long way toward ensuring that his vision of long-term troops in Baghdad can be realized. After all, as the senior Army officer says, "The purpose of the U.S. Army is not just to fight and win the nation's wars. It is the purpose of the Army, having won that war, to continue to occupy that country and stay in that region so as to not have to go to war there again." Someone should tell the liberals. **TAP**

Spencer Ackerman, *a reporter/blogger for talkingpointsmemo.com, is a* Prospect *senior correspondent.*

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Who's To Blame for the Brave New Economy?

Prosperity Squandered

BY ROBERT KUTTNER

FOR THREE DECADES, THE ECONOMY HAS INCREAS- ingly become more unequal and more precarious for ordinary people. During the same period, risks that used to be absorbed by large, stable employers or social programs have been transferred back to individuals and families.

Meanwhile, the financial economy has become steadily more speculative and corrupt, as insiders, often with severe conflicts of interest, extract wealth from the real economy. The dot-com bust of 2000-2001 was the result of those conflicts—accountants who were supposedly guardians of honest books colluded with management to pump up stock values and deceive investors; stock "analysts" compensated on the basis of their success in duping the dumb money.

But no sooner did Congress pass a mild corrective measure in the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002 than the scams mutated into new forms. Unregulated hedge funds and private equity companies took excessive risks with borrowed money. Mortgage companies did end runs around lending standards. As this article goes to press, the credit crisis is already the most serious since the Great Depression with the Federal Reserve acting as enabler—and it remains to be seen how well the broader economic effects will be contained.

In my book, ***THE SQUANDERING OF AMERICA***, I demonstrate that the increasing economic insecurity for ordinary Americans and the increasing financial risks to the entire economic system are two sides of the same coin. And the coin is the deliberate dismantling of the mixed economy, with the complicity of many Democrats as well as Republicans. This process is not only bad for broadly shared prosperity, but bad for economic efficiency and the stability of the system itself.

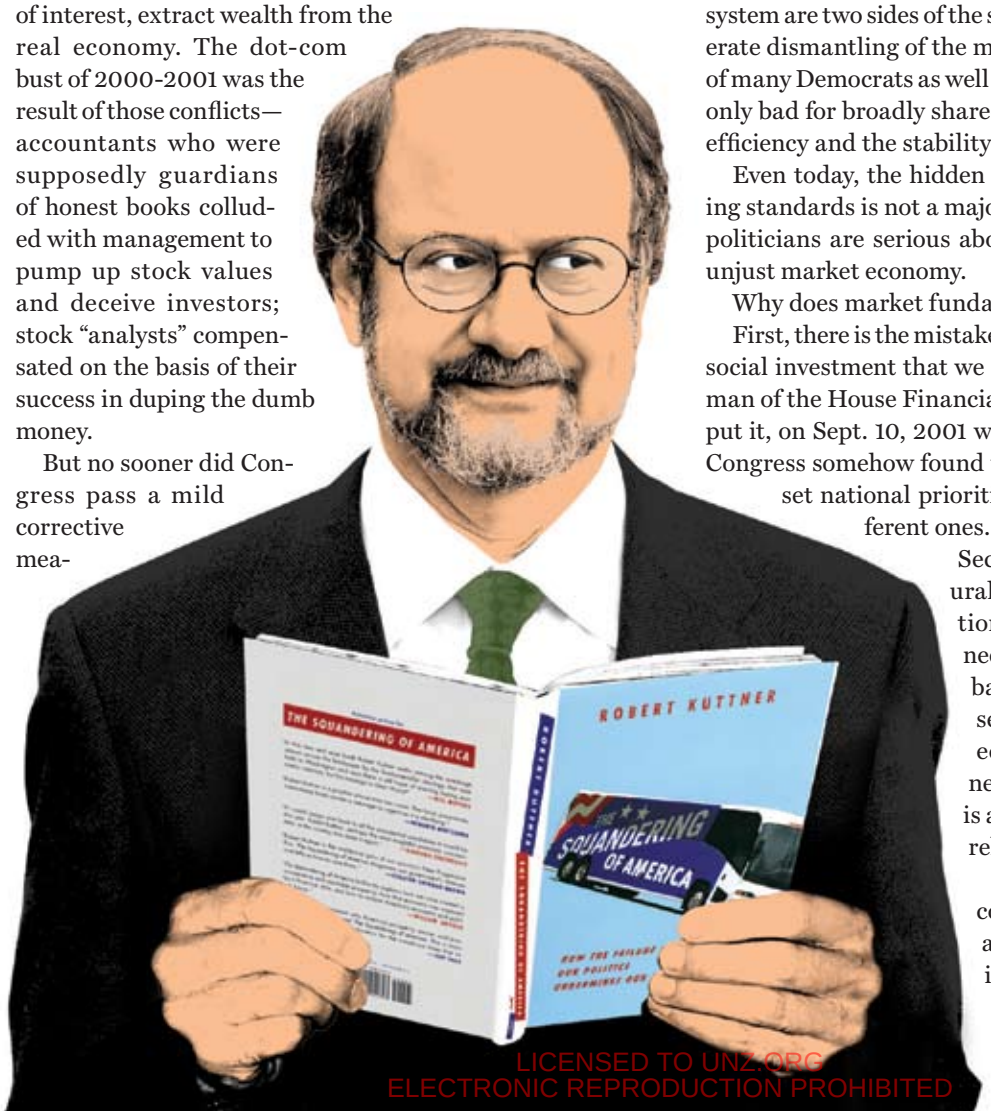
Even today, the hidden depression of flat or declining living standards is not a major topic of political debate. Too few politicians are serious about re-regulating an unstable and unjust market economy.

Why does market fundamentalism still hold sway?

First, there is the mistaken premise that we can't "afford" the social investment that we need. But as Barney Frank, chairman of the House Financial Services Committee, memorably put it, on Sept. 10, 2001 we couldn't afford the Iraq War, yet Congress somehow found the money. The job of politics is to set national priorities, and we need dramatically different ones.

Second, we have had a 30-year unnatural experiment in financial deregulation, and deregulation flunked. We need to make the financial economy of bankers and brokers once again the servant, not the master, of the real economy of workers and entrepreneurs. This is not just about equity; it is about solvency. Yet both parties are reluctant to challenge Wall Street.

Third, globalization of capital and commerce makes the project of managed capitalism far more difficult, institutionally and politically. It was



JOHN RITTER

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Are we all complicit in the erosion of economic stability in American life? Or are corporate and financial elites the culprits? Our resident Roberts—Kuttner and Reich, each of whom has authored a new book on the political economy—argue the responsibility question while agreeing (mainly) on how to fix what ails us.

the nation state that balanced pure capitalism with regulation and social investment. There is no global government, and financial interests have far more influence than ordinary citizens in transnational rule-setting bodies such as the World Trade Organization and the International Monetary Fund. "Free trade" versus "protectionism" is not a helpful distinction. The real issue is laissez faire versus a mixed, balanced economy.

So long as the Supreme Court defines money as speech, financial special interests will have disproportionate influence on both parties, and will sidetrack reform. But the antidote to money is people. Economic progressives like Sens. Sherrod Brown and John Tester, who won election in improbable places, show that we rebuild a progressive majority by articulating pocketbook interests of ordinary people. When leaders offer citizens democratic politics as an avenue of redress, people can be a stronger force than Wall Street.

The Economy Transformed

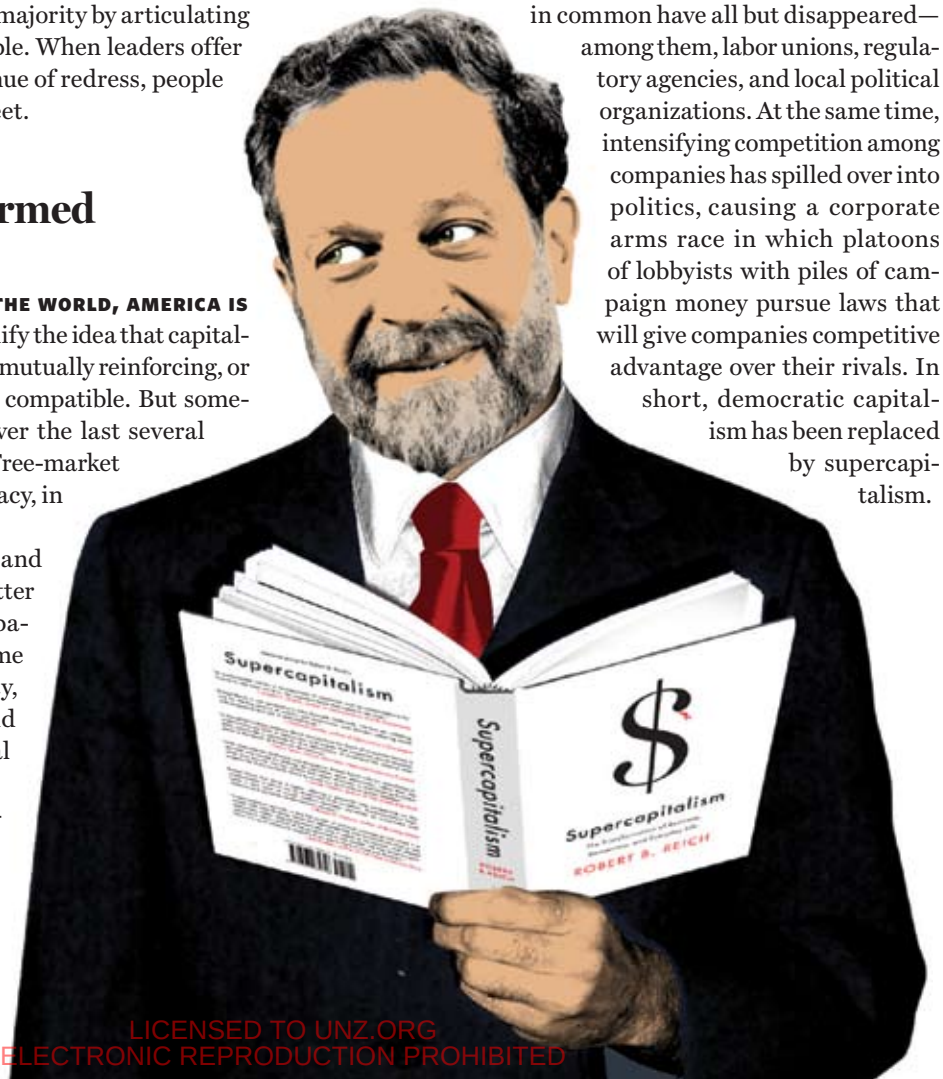
BY ROBERT B. REICH

OF ALL THE NATIONS OF THE WORLD, AMERICA IS assumed to best exemplify the idea that capitalism and democracy are mutually reinforcing, or at least fundamentally compatible. But something has happened over the last several decades to challenge that assumption. Free-market capitalism has triumphed. Yet democracy, in key respects, has weakened.

While the stock market has soared and consumers have received better and better deals, these gains have been accompanied by widening inequalities of income and wealth, heightened job insecurity, the loss of vibrant Main Streets, and environmental hazards such as global warming.

Strictly speaking, these are not failings of capitalism. Capitalism's role is to enlarge the economic pie. How the slices are divided and whether they are applied to private goods like personal computers or to public goods like clean air is up to society to decide. This is the role we assign to democracy—to accomplish what can only be achieved by citizens joining together with other citizens to determine the rules of the game, to seek the common good over and above individual goods. Yet democracy is struggling to perform these basic functions.

As I explain in my new book, ***SUPERCAPITALISM***, since the 1970s we in our capacities as consumers and investors seeking the best deals have done significantly better, wielding enormous power. But as citizens seeking the common good, we've lost ground. The institutions that used to negotiate to spread the wealth and protect what we valued in common have all but disappeared—among them, labor unions, regulatory agencies, and local political organizations. At the same time, intensifying competition among companies has spilled over into politics, causing a corporate arms race in which platoons of lobbyists with piles of campaign money pursue laws that will give companies competitive advantage over their rivals. In short, democratic capitalism has been replaced by supercapitalism.



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Wal-Mart has brought down prices on a wide range of items to lower than they'd otherwise be, benefitting its customers and investors. But many of us, as citizens, are appalled at Wal-Mart's low pay, its power to force suppliers to cut their own payrolls and outsource abroad, and its decimating effects on Main Streets. The executives of Wal-Mart or any other large company are doing what they're supposed to do according to the current rules of the game. The real question is whether and how those rules should be changed. If government were as sensitive to our citizen values as it is to us as consumers and investors, it could, for example, enact laws making it easier for employees to unionize, requiring all large companies to give their employees health insurance, protecting Main Street retailers from the predations of big-box retailers, and raising the minimum wage high enough to give all working people a true "living" wage.

We haven't faced the cognitive dissonance between what we want as consumers and investors and what we want as citizens. —REICH

All such measures would have the likely effect of causing Wal-Mart and other large companies to raise their prices and reduce returns to investors, but that shouldn't rule out such reforms. Personally, I'd be willing to sacrifice some of the benefits I get as a consumer and investor in order to achieve these social ends—as long as I knew everyone else were, too, if those were the new rules of the game. But how to effect them? The money that companies such as Wal-Mart are pouring into Washington and every other major capital gets in the way. This is the heart of the matter: We must make the rules—rules that reflect our values as citizens as well as our values as consumers and investors.



Kuttner Responds:

Dear Bob,

Your book and mine begin with similar premises. As you put it, "Free market capitalism has triumphed. Yet democracy has weakened." And we reach similar conclusions: Our politics has been captured by corporate lobbyists and the power of K Street's money. In turn, "cynicism about democracy" is at risk of becoming "a self-fulfilling prophesy"—making it harder to take back our politics.

You also very appropriately warn against "corporate social responsibility" as a panacea. This discussion is brilliant, original, and cuts through a lot of wishful nonsense. The job of corporations, you quote Milton Friedman, is to make a profit. So if we as citizens want to balance corporate goals with civic and distributive ones, that battle must be won in the political arena, not by corporate do-gooding. To all this, I can only say, Amen.

Yet between premise and conclusion, you and I trace somewhat different odysseys. After issuing a disclaimer—"The story I will tell is not technologically deterministic"—you go on to interpret the corporate takeover of American politics and the widening inequality substantially as a story of technology.

You write that the power shift was caused neither by globalization, nor deregulation, nor a decline in civic life: "The real explanation involves the way technologies have empowered consumers and investors to get better and better deals—and how these deals, in turn, have sucked relative equality and stability, as well as other social values, out of the system."

Here I must respectfully disagree. Exhibit A is Western Europe, which has had access to the same technologies as the U.S. Yet because Europe's social institutions are anchored in very different policies, Europe has not had America's widened inequality or weakened popular institutions (though social democracy there is certainly under siege).

Second, the new ability of global capital to play nations off one another to curtail decent social, tax, wage, and regulatory policies has indeed made it much harder to sustain managed capitalism in one country. As I argue in *The Squandering of America*, the challenge of harnessing capitalism in the public interest is now global as well as national.

Further, I am a little wary of formulations such as this one, which is a key theme of your book: "The fact is, most of us are consumers and investors, and as such are benefiting enormously from supercapitalism."

Bob, you once wrote a celebrated and prescient piece on the statelessness of the modern corporation, titled "Who is Us?" I would now ask you, in the spirit of Tonto's epic question to the Lone Ranger, "Who is We?" In truth, investments and other net gains from the new economy are very narrowly concentrated. The financial elites who have gained immensely as investors, and the consumers who benefit modestly from Wal-Mart's lower prices, are not the same people.

Americans are not an undifferentiated "we." Nor are Americans just consumers and investors; they are also workers. The power shift of supercapitalism has put a terrible squeeze on wages, incomes, and job security. And contrary to your assertions, I'm not sure that corporate CEOs, almost by definition, earn their outsized pay. You offer astute and original insights into the economic dynamics of a hyper-competitive economy, and that alone makes your book must-reading. But I don't share your analysis of what drove the distributive shift, or the schizophrenia you attribute to an undifferentiated we. However, you are eloquent on the need for us to take back our politics. Taking back our democracy will entail popular struggle against corporate hegemony, just as it did in the very different technological eras of the 1890s and the 1930s. We can agree on that.

Best,
Bob K.

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Reich Responds:

Dear Bob,

I like your book, too, and agree with much of it. But our readers are probably less interested in where we agree (and even less moved by how impressed we are by one another's arguments) than in where and how we disagree.

In explaining the dire state of economics and politics in 21st-century America, you blame "the elite capture of politics," and their "deliberate" dismantling of the mixed economy. I think you're wrong. Although I've spent the better part of my adult life criticizing business elites and Wall Street (and, while in office, battling them), they're not to blame.

American CEOs and Wall Street financiers are no more greedy or less socially responsible than they were 30 or 40 years ago. As a group, they've always been greedy and never been particularly socially responsible. Something changed to make their greed and lack of social concern far more dangerous to our economy and democracy. What was it? Technologies that four decades ago began knitting the global economy together—cargo planes, container ships, satellite communications technologies, and, eventually, the Internet. Also technologies that began to displace labor and undermine the economies of scale on which mass production (and labor unions) had been premised—such new technologies as numerically-controlled machine tools, robotics, computer-aided design and manufacturing, and automated equipment.

As I argue in *Supercapitalism*, these technologies have given consumers and investors a far wider range of choice than ever before, along with easy access to comparative information about goods and services. And it's our newfound abilities as consumers and investors to get great deals that's the real culprit—pushing corporations and financial institutions into far more intense competition than ever before. Among the results: outsourcing abroad, automating many routine jobs here in America, fighting unions, and all too often violating human rights abroad.

You ask why Western Europe retains more of a social safety net and has less inequality than the United States when it's had access to the same technologies. The answer, I think, is that America has led the way technologically. In addition, Europe was far to the left of the U.S. when the transformation began, so it has more ground to traverse as it moves in our direction. But both Europe and Japan are following along the same supercapitalist path toward widening inequality and the dismantling of many social institutions. Just look at what Sarkozy is up to, in France of all places.

You suggest that global capital can now play off nations with decent social policies, leading a race to the bottom. But who, exactly, is "global capital?" I participate in the pension plan available to most university teachers called TIAA-CREF, which has been scouring the world in search of high returns—putting pressure on companies, wherever headquartered, to cut costs. So, in a sense, "global capital" is me—and perhaps you. While it's true that investment gains of the new economy are narrowly concentrated, more than half of American households own some shares of stock, and those shareholders are determined to get the best deal they can with their holdings. The consumers who have benefited from the lower prices of the global and increasingly technological economy aren't necessarily the rich who have made a killing as investors, but there's still enough overlap to make most of us complicit.

That complicity doesn't make the social consequences right, but it makes coping with them more complicated. We have to deal with some trade-offs. A living wage of $20 an hour, for example, is likely to make some of the personal services you and I buy more expensive. A law banning American high-tech companies from colluding with the Chinese in violating human rights may slightly reduce the returns to your and my pension plans. Democracy is where we're supposed to address these trade-offs. The tragedy is we can't, because we as citizens can't be heard above the din of corporate lobbyists seeking to advance their own firm's or industry's competitive position through public policies.

That's where we need to place our efforts—in protecting democracy from supercapitalism. While some short-term political gains might be had in conjuring up a supposed conspiracy of business and financial elites against the rest of us, it's the wrong target. And genuine reform won't happen if our aim is misdirected.

All best,
Bob R.



Kuttner's Rebuttal:

Dear Bob,

Let's see if we can narrow our agreements and disagreements. I don't think you've engaged my contention that in the past three decades financial elites have become much more serious, systematic, and ideologically single-minded about dismantling the mixed economy; or acknowledged how they captured much of the Democratic Party, as well as the Republican Party, for their agenda of reverting to mostly laissez-faire capitalism with only a modest safety net and as little financial regulation as possible.

Our debate is over why this occurred. I don't contend that today's elites are more greedy, but that they're less constrained. They've had greater success in deliberately weakening countervailing institutions such as the labor movement and government regulation. Globalization helps them do end runs around democratic constraints. We agree that one instrument of this attack is increased corporate and Wall Street lobbying. But lobbying is a tactic, not the essence of a power shift.

You are right that in some cases, technology facilitated this shift. The technology of a globalized, internet economy does make it harder, other things being equal, to operate a managed form of capitalism in one country. The fact that our European friends still pull it off has more to do with your observation that they were further left to begin with. That meant that universal institutions, like national health insurance (and a counterpart ideology), were in place and harder to dislodge than the incomplete patchwork of safety-net protections in the U.S. For

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all of Sarkozy's bluster, he is far more of a Gaullist—economic nationalism plus welfare state—than a neo-liberal. But, yes, I agree that Europe is also under assault, albeit at a slower pace, from similar global forces.

Globalization has made it harder to constrain capital, and that's one reason why income distribution has worsened in the U.S. The premise that "we" are torn because we benefit as well as suffer from globalization needs to be disentangled. In truth, the distribution of the benefits is wildly unequal—most go to the top. "Our capacity as consumers and investors to get great deals," as you write, is true only on average. As the income-distribution figures show, the net result is a great deal for the top, an insecure deal for the middle, and a raw deal for the bottom.

We do have more choices, but it is possible as a consumer to like Italian shoes or Chinese computers or shares in the Indian stock market and still believe as a citizen and worker that we need a managed form of capitalism worldwide. The institutional and political (and ideological) challenge is to inject public-interest, pro-worker, and pro-consumer regulation into a market system that is global.

The new capitalism is a great deal for the top, an insecure deal for the middle, and a raw deal for the bottom. —KUTTNER

You're partly right that this will entail some trade-offs. But that can be overstated. The amount of money that actually goes to pay the worker who makes a pair of running shoes in China—a few cents on the dollar—is so small compared to what's taken by the rest of the distribution chain that decent wages would hardly blip the retail price. Don't forget that consumers and workers alike gained during the domestic postwar boom, as long as productivity kept rising, because power relations were more symmetrical. Distribution of the total gains remains a political question.

I also have trouble with your contention that CEOs, almost by definition, earn their outsized pay because the stakes of succeeding are now so much higher. In fact, many of them don't; pay and corporate performance don't correlate well. Many others cash in big by manipulating stock bonuses and options, and by engineering mergers. Most students of CEO pay, both left and right, have concluded that the roughly eightfold increase in the ratio of CEO pay to worker pay has a lot more to do with "shifting norms." A less polite phrase would be a power shift, enabled by corporate boards stacked with the CEO's cronies.

As recent financial events underscore, what's at stake if we fail to constrain runaway supercapitalism is not just our broadly distributed prosperity but our solvency. We are in full agreement on the need for a struggle to take back our political capacity to constrain capital and restore democracy.

Best,
Bob K.



Reich's Rejoinder:

Dear Bob,

But to make your argument convincing you need to offer an explanation for why financial elites became "more serious, systematic, and ideologically single-minded about dismantling the mixed economy" over the last three decades, and not before. Why, in your view, did they grow "less constrained?" Why did they become successful in "deliberately" weakening countervailing institutions starting in the late 1970s and not, say, in the 1950s? My understanding of history is that America's financial elites have wanted to dismantle the mixed economy and weaken countervailing institutions at least since the progressive era in the first decades of the 20th century, when federal and state governments first began regulating markets in the public interest. You refer to "globalization"—but globalization didn't just happen. As I've noted, advanced transportation and communication technologies that came on stream in the 1970s made it possible for American consumers and investors to get great deals from all over the world. This is what changed.

I completely agree with you that it's possible for us as consumers or investors to like the great deals we get on foreign-made shoes, Chinese computers, or shares in the Indian stock market while at the same time believing as citizens that we need a more managed form of capitalism, at home and even worldwide. That's precisely my point. We haven't faced the cognitive dissonance between what we want as consumers and investors, on the one hand, and what we want as citizens on the other.

We didn't have to face this dissonance in the middle decades of the 20th century because our choices as consumers and investors were far more limited then. Yes, wages rose for almost every income group then, but I don't agree that consumers did particularly well. If we wanted a car, we had only the Big Three to choose from; if we wanted a telephone, we had only Ma Bell; if we wanted to put our savings somewhere, we had some local banks. Now that we have a world of choice, we as consumers are doing far better. So are we as investors, to the extent we have pension plans and 401(k)s. But as citizens who value job stability, good middle-class wages, vibrant Main Streets, and a more equal distribution of income and wealth than we have now, we're doing worse. (By the way, I don't think current levels of CEO pay are morally or socially justifiable, and I argue for a much higher marginal income tax on the highest earners—which also include movie celebrities and private-equity fund moguls.)

All this means we have to face some difficult trade-offs and hard political choices. But there's no way we're going to have a halfway intelligent political debate about these trade-offs and choices until and unless we stop vilifying corporations, CEOs, financial elites, and even Wal-Mart. These institutions aren't our nemesis. They and their ilk did not do this to America, Bob. We all had a hand in it.

All best,
Bob R.

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The Sisyphus From Searchlight

Harry Reid has united Senate Democrats on shutting down the war, but the Republican votes just aren't there. He'll keep forcing votes on the war until, he hopes, there are more Democrats and fewer Republicans in 2009.

BY TERENCE SAMUEL

HARRY REID LOVES MOVIES. "I GO TO THE MOVIES every chance I get," he says, sitting in a lavish conference room just off the Senate floor at the north end of the Capitol.

It is noon on a Friday, and a narrow beam of sunlight shines in through the window and rests on one side of Reid's face, making his right eye appear a little bluer than his left. In recent weeks, he says, he has seen *The Bourne Ultimatum* and hated it, and *The 3:10 to Yuma* and loved it. But it was *In the Valley of Elah* that Reid really enjoyed. "The acting," he says, trailing off. "Tommy Lee Jones, and Susan Sarandon ... and then that ugly woman—Charlize Theron, she added a little to it."

Reid's unexpected injection of comedy (in October *Esquire* named Theron the "Sexiest Woman Alive") causes Reid's communications director, Jim Manley, to almost pop a vein trying to contain his guffaws.

Reid, animated now in a way unlike the dour, partisan man o' war persona he shows in the Senate, keeps talking. "The Valley of Elah," he says, "is where David and Goliath fought their battle."

This elemental tussle seems to hold special sway in Reid's psyche. In his successful second run for the Senate in 1986, Reid ran television ads in which he depicted himself as a David pitted against a Republican Goliath. In the ads, Reid showed himself to be under assault by a gang of Washington politicians.

Of course, in the famous biblical tale, there is no battle at all: Two armies face off and for a long time they just shout insults at each other. Then David, who was "but a youth and ruddy, and of a fair countenance," decides to take the fate of the Israelites onto his own shoulders. Defying very long odds, he fells Goliath with "a single shot through the forehead."

The moral of the story, of course, is that courage can pay great and unexpected dividends, and even in the most dire circumstances the tide will eventually turn.

REID IS THE DEMOCRATIC LEADER IN THE UNITED STATES SENATE. A converted Mormon who reads a few verses from the Bible each night before bed, Reid also finds himself at the center of one of the epic struggles of our time: the confrontation between the reckless ambitions of the Bush administration, as defined by the disastrous war in Iraq, and the demands of a weary nation that, largely, would like to see the war ended and the administration contained. In a very fundamental way, the political struggle to end the Iraq War and to curb Bushism rests more squarely on the shoulders of Harry Reid than on those of any other single person.

The big question is whether the hard-edged, nonideological, partisan dealmaker is up to the job. The plotline so far has been one of slow, steady progress, near losses, and frustrating setbacks. Last spring, as the debate over the war grew more heated, Reid declared Bush's efforts in Iraq a failure and said he believed "this war is lost, that the surge is not accomplishing anything." Republicans were outraged and some Democrats uneasy at the remarks. The comment drew an uncommon fusillade of criticism from the dean of the Washington press corps, David Broder. "Here's a Washington political riddle where you fill in the blanks: As Alberto Gonzales is to the Republicans, Blank Blank is to the Democrats—a continuing embarrassment thanks to his amateurish performance," Broder wrote. "If you answered 'Harry Reid' give yourself an A."

The question of Reid's effectiveness has been a parlor game in Washington since he took over as minority leader more than two years ago, but the scrutiny intensified when Democrats took control of the Congress, making him the most powerful elected Democrat in the land. Reid has been a source of deep concern, disappointment even, for some who had hoped for more cataclysmic confrontations with Bush, particularly on Iraq. For every Senate vote in which Democrats are unable to prevail, Reid is called to account.

These judgments may be too harsh; it is Reid's burden that so much of his success can look like failure. But that is the inescapable fact of the asymmetrical comparison with which he must live: Legislative progress will never compare well with wins and losses on the battlefield. Close votes are no balm for a rising body count.

Democrats emerged from the 2006 election with control of

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FORREST MACCORMACK

both houses of Congress and with some degree of a popular mandate to end the war. Slowly they have tried to force President Bush into a corner with legislation that would require him to bring the troops home. In many segments of the left, the unexpected Democratic gains last November signaled not just a triumph over the president and his party, but an imminent end to the war as well.

But that calculation was, by necessity, dependent on Republicans getting the message voters intended to send. They did not. And now Reid is caught between his limited maneuverability and the huge expectations of those anti-war voters who put Democrats back in control of the Congress.

To his credit, Reid has held together a fractious Democratic caucus, delivering a solid block of anti-war votes over the last nine months—remarkable when you consider that his caucus includes everyone from socialist Bernie Sanders to the deeply conservative Nebraskan Ben Nelson. And while Democrats picked up six new seats, the early money was that a good number of the new additions, coming from the Red States of America—Montana, Virginia, Missouri—would be more conservative, more cautious, and less inclined to hold to the party line.

"I think he has an incredibly difficult and challenging job," says freshman Sen. Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota. "He got a tiny vote margin and he's got people elected who are politically all over the place and he has kept us together. That's not been easy."

Democrats are continuously trying to explain why they come up short in their confrontation with Bush, but there is no longer any question that the party is united against the war, and that was not always the case. One Senate effort to redeploy troops last summer got 13 votes. This fall Reid thought he had 59. It turned out Reid was wrong; he ended up with 56, and has been criticized for not having done more. The critiques usually go to lack of toughness on the familiar question of funding.

The sharpest criticism came from those who wanted the president impeached and Congress to end funding for the war. Others insisted that despite the difficult arithmetic he faced in the Senate, Reid should have made it tougher for Republicans to pursue their pro-war, pro-Bush strategy.

The Democratic presidential contenders, sensing the growing despair within the base over the lack of progress on Iraq, have been most vocal in demanding fixed deadlines for withdrawal and defunding. "The Democrats should ... announce that no money will be appropriated for any military action against another nation without a proper declaration of war," former New York Gov. Mario Cuomo recently wrote in *The New York Times*. There are others who want to withdraw the 2002 authorization for the war—a strategy that has the stale quality of a do-over.

Another strategy has been pushed by former Sen. Mike Gravel, now an oddball entry in the Democratic presidential sweepstakes, who long ago helped lead the fight to end the Vietnam War on the Senate floor. He has called on Reid to turn the Senate into a vote treadmill for Republicans. In a letter to Reid, he wrote: "If you really want to shape war policy,

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From the 2007 photojournalism award-winning series, "AIDS Orphans." *Photo: Mike Stocker*

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you must call up a cloture vote every single day. Of course you wouldn't have the votes at first, but that's why you need to force the Senate to remain in session seven days a week to vote every day on cloture throughout the summer."

This is a strategy that has possibilities, but it is not guaranteed to work, particularly in an institution designed to prevent easy consensus; the Senate was built to say no. But the strategy has no chance of success unless Democrats want to shut down all other business and simply work toward torturing enough GOP votes to the other side. Since Democrats have calculated that they need an agenda beyond Iraq, another strategy would be voting to cut off funding. Reid and Russ Feingold are co-sponsoring a bill to cut off funds for the war. The problem with this strategy, again, is the votes: While polls show that increasingly Americans are willing to cut off funds for Iraq, the defunding bill failed on the floor in September, 28-70.

So Reid must hold his position until the Democratic hand is stronger, which, in the cultural arithmetic of the Senate, simply means getting 60 votes to shut down the chatter on the other side by overcoming the GOP's filibusters.

Asked if the strategy is working as he'd hoped, Reid says, "Actually the strategy I envisioned was walking out and giving a speech and having the Republicans crumble and start voting with us." That's his famously dry humor. More seriously he acknowledges, "My majority is very slim."

And there it is: A sprawling, expensive, deadly war grinds on. And it is left to Harry Reid, and with his counterpart House Speaker Nancy Pelosi to explain why the president seems to have remained in the winning column on the war.

The sad truth is that Democrats now see the next election as the best way to end the war—both by winning the White House and by widening their margin in the Senate. After the euphoria of last November, Democrats are now compelled to go back to the voters with a Dickensian plea: "Please, may we have some more?" Reid thinks Democrats may get it. "I think they could be in for another shock like they had last time," he says of the Republicans. Which is one thing that would make Reid's job a lot easier.

HARRY REID WAS BORN IN SEARCHLIGHT, NEVADA, IN DECEMBER 1939. It was a hard place in a hard time. His mother took in laundry for money, and his father, Harry Sr., was a hard-rock miner, digging for gold in the hollowed out mountains of southeastern Nevada. For the Reids and their four boys—Harry was third—the good life was as elusive as the precious metal that was supposed to be buried in the mountains.

The legend of Reid's tough upbringing is now a matter of lore: The home without plumbing, the 40-mile hitchhike to high school in Henderson, the high school fights and boxing matches. There is the story of the dentures he bought for his toothless mother with some of the first money he ever made. His father killed himself in 1972, at 58.

Hard times are bred into Reid, and on some level that explains why he loves Woody Guthrie, who chronicles those hard times in song. "I am a Woody Guthrie junkie. I know more

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about Woody Guthrie than you can imagine. You have no idea how much I know about Woody Guthrie." His favorite song? "Union Maid," an anthem to fighting the long odds.

Reid ran for the Senate in 1974 and lost by 624 votes to Paul Laxalt, whom he would succeed 12 years later. He practiced law and lost a race for mayor of Las Vegas in 1976. In 1977, he was appointed chairman of the Nevada Gaming Commission, where he faced down the Vegas mob. One measure of his success was the bomb his wife found rigged to the family car one day, after she had loaded the kids in. For a while after that the Reids turned on their car by remote control.

In 1986, after two terms in the House, Reid ran successfully for the Senate seat he had come so close to winning a dozen years earlier. There is no question that Reid, the Bible-reading, yoga-practicing Morman, is afraid of neither hard times nor a long, hard fight.

Reid knows that the groundswell of support that put him in the leader's chair can turn to outrage without some sense of progress.

REID HAS AN ALMOST SPIRITUAL REGARD FOR THE SENATE, AND deep respect for those who share his views of the place, but clearly John Warner, the Virginia gentleman who has come to embody the high-minded seriousness of the Senate, has pissed him off.

In August, after a trip to Iraq, Warner, the former chairman of the Armed Services Committee, suggested that the president could bring 5,000 troops home by Christmas. It was exactly the kind of signal that Reid had been waiting for—Republicans willing to make principled breaks from the White House on the war.

When the Senate had voted in August 2006 to redeploy troops out of Iraq, the bill died 86-13 with 31 of the 45 Democrats in the Senate voting no. This April, the Senate passed a supplemental spending bill with withdrawal deadlines that required a presidential veto to stop it. By July, there were 56 votes for an amendment by Virginia freshman Jim Webb that would have required the Pentagon to keep soldiers home for as long as they had been deployed; Warner and five other Republicans voted for it. It fell short of the 60 votes necessary to end the debate and a GOP filibuster, but Reid thought he had reason to be hopeful. The 56 did not include Tim Johnson, the South Dakota senator who was still recovering from a brain hemorrhage that had taken him out of the Senate after the 2006 election.

And then in August Warner announced that he thought some troops should come home by Christmas. Warner is key to moving GOP votes, and Reid thought he really only needed one more. By the time the amendment came to a vote again in the third week of September, it was called the Webb-Hagel amendment, having attracted the support of the most vocal GOP critic of the war in the Senate, Nebraskan Chuck Hagel.

Reid thought he was close: "I'd had conversations with Republican senators, one of whom said, 'The biggest mistake I ever made was voting against [the Webb amendment],' and that person voted against it again." His anger is barely contained. "Logically, that does not make a lot of sense. So, I'd assume that I'd had that vote, and I think I did it on the basis that was a rational assumption."

He also assumed that Warner was with him. He was not.

"Warner ..." and here Reid pauses for a long time, obviously digging deep for some Senate decorum, "was a terrible disappointment. Here was a man who had agreed to co-sponsor the amendment, and had voted for it before, and suddenly with a hug from Bush, he decides that he can't co-sponsor nor can he vote for it again. ... That's about as flip-flopping as a fish on the wharf after he gets caught. That's flipping all over. ... I guess he wants to be invited to White House dinners or something."



Discontented Dems: Speaker Nancy Pelosi, Senate Majority Whip Dick Durbin, and Reid emerge from a September meeting with the Decider.

THE LOSS ON THE WEBB AMENDMENT MAY HAVE DOOMED ANY chance of a bipartisan deal on Iraq. It has hardened the lines, and Reid, a consummate dealmaker who reveres pragmatism, seems little interested in reaching out anymore. If his earlier strategy was about capitalizing on the public's anger at the war, his new one is, too: His goal is now to make support for the war as politically costly as possible for Republican senators.

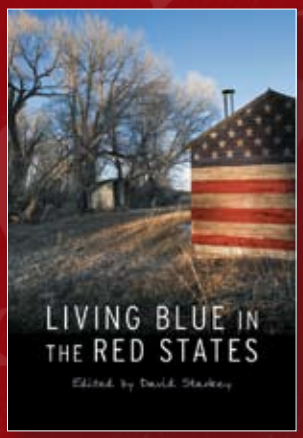
"I just think they are making a big mistake, and we are just going to just keep pushing," he vows. "This is no longer just Bush's war. This is Bush's war and the Republicans in the Senate's war."

His approach is to keep forcing votes of the Republicans, even though he seems to have given up hope that he can convince many more to break with the president, despite Bush's poor approval ratings.

"The Republicans in the Senate do not represent the mainstream Republicans throughout the country," he says. "Philosophically, they think the president is doing a great job. They

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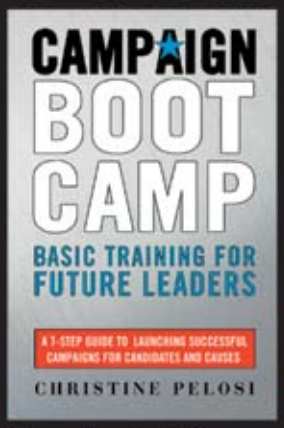


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Political pundits never tire of reminding us of the great cultural divide between conservative "red" states and liberal "blue" ones. But common sense tells us that not all people in these states can be politically like-minded. David Starkey, a former red-state resident, wondered what politically progressive creative writers were feeling in the wake of George W. Bush's reelection. How, Starkey asked contributors, does one live blue in a red state?

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support him on virtually everything he does. They support him on not funding health care, education. They support him on not doing anything about global warming. They support him on all these tax cuts. ... We are just going to keep pushing."

Reid appears ready to go into the 2008 election with the same message as 2006, which is that the highest priority for congressional Republicans has been to stick with the president. Democrats must defend 12 incumbents next year, while the Republicans have 22 seats up. While doodling through a recent meeting, Reid said he came up with a list of 12 states where Democrats could mount serious challenges for GOP seats.

"If you could bet on Senate races—I guess some people do; it's not legal—I think you would bet and say that we are going to win Colorado," Reid says. "I think you would bet and say that we are going to win Virginia; I think you would bet and say we are going to win New Hampshire."

Reid noted the recent talk among Republicans about returning to their core values, like tax cuts, gay rights, and abortion. "These are not the issues the American people are going to want," he says. The question is whether Reid, with his arsenals of small stones—tough votes on resolutions and amendments—will be able to deliver what they want most: an end to the Iraq War. "We are going to fight hard," he pledges. "I just do the best I can."

Reid knows that the groundswell of support that put him in the leader's chair can turn to outrage without some sense of progress, but he remains unbowed. "I don't apologize to anyone for what we've been able to accomplish. I've been able, having 49 votes, out of 100 senators, to accomplish a lot. My senators have held together. And they have held together quite well."

Democrats are sticking with him, or at least not turning against him. Even MoveOn.org, whose frustration with Democrats on the war is palpable, adopted a strategy of not saying anything about Reid after he allowed a roll call vote condemning the organization for an ad critical of Gen. David H. Patraeus. MoveOn leaders "are just not dealing with the Senate leadership at all," said a spokesman for the group.

Among Democratic senators, Reid's position may never be more secure. "He's doing a great job," says Ted Kennedy, a senator for 45 years. "While the focus has been on the war, this leader has kept the Democrats together." Montana freshman Jon Tester says he thinks people underestimate Reid. "I think he comes across on TV as being meek and kind, but he's tougher than nails. I think he does a great job considering the majority he has to work with."

In a 1998 book about his hometown, *Searchlight: The Camp That Didn't Fail*, Reid reflects on the uncertainty that comes with living in a mining town, comparing it to the ocean: "It has tides that sweep in and tides that go out, the ebb and flow of nature," he writes. "Those in the ebb are sometimes unable to see the flow." Reid may now be in the ebb, and in many ways his work to end the war in Iraq comes down to that: seeing, and finding, the flow. **TAP**

Terence Samuel *is a senior correspondent at* The American Prospect.

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Prince William's Folly

Northern Virginia's nativists (some racist, some Republican, some both) are hell-bent on driving undocumented immigrants away. With demonstrations and lawsuits, the immigrants are fighting back.

BY TARA MCKELVEY

IT WAS A MAY AFTERNOON IN WASHINGTON'S MERIDIAN Hill Park. Forty-year-old Ricardo Juarez Nava was at a rally in support of immigrants when he saw a neatly dressed man approaching the group. As it turned out, the man, Tyler J. Froatz Jr., was protesting the rally and had brought along an anti-immigration flyer (a crudely drawn illustration of border officers firing on an immigrant with the caption, "THE ONLY WAY TO STOP A FLOOD ..."), and a backpack with a claw hammer, a Taser, and pepper spray inside. Froatz, who is 24 and a New Jersey native, also had a fully automatic M1 carbine rifle in the trunk of his car.

"He was pushing and trying to fight with me. He had a knife here," Juarez says, gesturing toward a front pocket in his jeans as he describes Froatz's efforts to disrupt the pro-immigration rally, which had been organized by a local group Juarez founded called Mexicans Without Borders. After Froatz's arrest, police discovered a hand grenade, a Molotov cocktail, and 1,000 rounds of ammunition in his Northwest Washington apartment.



Fighting Words: Ricardo Juarez Nava, right, and Father Jorge Acho lead a rally against a crackdown on illegal immigrants.

KEVIN CLARK / THE WASHINGTON POST

On the afternoon of our September interview, four months after the assault, Juarez is sitting in a bookstore in Woodbridge, Virginia, sipping coffee. One of 12 children, Juarez was raised in Mexico by his widowed mother, who did laundry and sold firewood to support the family. He attended Mexico City's School of Sciences and Humanities and came to the United States in April 1995, where he found work in construction. In 2002 he founded Mexicans Without Borders to provide legal advice, counseling, and other kinds of support for immigrants in the Mid-Atlantic region.

For Juarez, it has been a rocky summer. In July, members of the Prince William Board of County Supervisors took aggressive steps against undocumented immigrants in Woodbridge and other cities in the county where Juarez lives. The July 10 county resolution passed by the Prince William Board recommended restricting such public services as access to senior centers for undocumented residents. The still more controversial aspect of the resolution instructs police to check into the immigration status of suspected illegals who have been detained—even for minor traffic violations; previously, police had checked on the immigration status only of those accused of violent crimes.

The resolution is the most stringent anti-illegal immigrant measure to be passed in Virginia. It was first drafted in June with the help of a 1,850-member group called Help Save Manassas, which works to oppose illegal aliens. After the resolution was approved in July, a series of public meetings on the details took place this fall. As the *Prospect* went to press, the board was still debating how to implement the restriction of services to illegal immigrants and whether to provide training for police in checking on immigration status at a total cost of roughly $14 million; the vote had yet to be scheduled.

Juarez and Mexicans Without Borders, which now has approximately 3,000 members, have been fighting the board's efforts. They organized a week-long boycott of local businesses that had not supported their organization (the group had asked businesses to display posters) and brought more than 3,000 people to a Sept. 2 rally at the seat of the Prince William County government. During the rally, Juarez stood close to a microphone and—over a frayed sound system—shouted to his followers. "Our constitutional and civil rights are being violated by this resolution," he said. "We are taking the case to court against the county of Prince William." The crowd broke into thunderous cheers and applause.

There have been death threats by e-mail, angry phone calls, and accusations from Republican county leaders that Mexicans Without Borders is trying to bully its opponents and whip up fear and hysteria in the Hispanic community. Meanwhile, bloggers and activists are investigating to see if Juarez and his family are legal, and have been posting their (inconclusive) findings on a Web site, Black Velvet Bruce Li, considered "the

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most influential local blog in Virginia" by some in the anti-illegal immigrant community.

"There are messages by e-mail that say they are going to kill me," Juarez says. He pulls on the collar of his red, checked shirt, fiddles with one of the buttons, and looks down at the table. "I don't want anyone to kill me."

PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY IS A COMFORTABLE, THOUGH traffic-clogged, community 30 miles southwest of Washington, D.C. The county, like the rest of the area, has undergone demographic changes. In greater D.C., the Hispanic population has doubled over the past two decades, according to U.S. Census data. In 2005 the Pew Hispanic Center estimated that roughly 250,000 illegal immigrants live in Virginia and, as happens with any dramatic influx of immigrants, they are blamed for an array of problems: crowded elementary school classrooms and hospital emergency rooms; violent gang activity; run-down rental units in residential neighborhoods; even the high cost of diapers for newborns in a hospital maternity ward.

The undocumented immigrants in Prince William County work in construction and restaurants and other parts of the service industry. And while there is no state-by-state breakdown on the employment of undocumented immigrants, an April 2006 Pew Hispanic Center Fact Sheet revealed national employment patterns among undocumented workers. More than half of short-term undocumented workers have jobs in construction and service, which includes food preparation and other restaurant work. The rest can be found in farming, fishing, forestry, and various industries. Undocumented workers make an average of $350 per week, as compared with the $930 per week that immigrants who have become citizens take home.



Family Man? Greg Letiecq says he's fighting illegal immigrants to protect his two daughters.

As residential neighborhoods in Woodbridge and other cities in Prince William County absorbed newly arrived immigrants—and elementary school classrooms filled up with Spanish-speaking children—local activists began to push county leaders to take harsh measures against undocumented workers. For many of the activists, the goal was to arrest and deport undocumented residents as quickly as possible.

In some ways, the issues in Prince William County are similar to those being raised in state and local governments across the country. Political leaders are cracking down on immigrant communities and trying to drive them out—imposing fines on landlords who rent to undocumented residents, for example, and penalizing employers who hire them. The situation is somewhat different—and for this reason groundbreaking—in Prince William County because county officials are involving police officers in their efforts to rid their community of illegal immigrants. Despite the differences in their approach, all of these ordinances have one thing in common: They are an attempt to enforce federal immigration policy at a local or state level.

In Prince William County, the conflict is sharp. Juarez and other immigrant workers, along with church leaders, a handful of unionists, and left-leaning activists, are on one side. Conservative political leaders—and an eclectic group of bloggers, Ku Klux Klansmen, and the Minuteman Civil Defense Corps—are on the other. Business owners who serve mainly immigrants are opposed to the resolution because they will lose (and are already losing) business; many business owners who employ undocumented workers, including construction companies, also oppose the resolution. Everybody talks of war. Individuals on one side, and possibly both, are armed.

John Steinbach, 60, a "permanent substitute teacher" and a Mexicans Without Borders volunteer, says the group admires the organizing principles of the Zapatista rebels, who fought the Mexican government in 1994. Roughly 300 volunteers for Mexicans Without Borders, which does not embrace Zapatista-style violence, translate government documents into Spanish, hand out flyers, and work to defeat the Prince William resolution. With assets of roughly $2,000 at any given moment, Mexicans Without Borders partners with other organizations such as the Woodbridge Workers Committee and local churches to offer English-language classes and distribute food and winter coats, roughly 250 each year. In an odd alliance, the police, too, seem to oppose aspects of the resolution, as they believe it will make their jobs harder. County Police Chief Charlie T. Deane, who has been hostile toward the resolution, told the Prince William board of "a potential chilling effect on witness cooperation and victim-witness cooperation."

On the other side, the most public face of the pro-resolution forces is Greg Letiecq, a blond, deeply tanned, 43-year-old information technologies consultant and ex-infantryman in the Maryland National Guard who is president of Help Save Manassas and the lead blogger on Black Velvet Bruce Li. On an afternoon in September, Letiecq sits in a Taco Bell near his house, wearing a "USA" T-shirt and talking about his concerns for the safety of his daughters, ages 5 and 2, in their neighborhood. He looks out the window. Cars whiz past us on suburban Sudley Manor Drive. Someone wearing a Quiznos Sub costume—an enormous, billowing white cup with a red straw—trudges near an intersection. None of it looks particularly dangerous. "In the house down the road, there were transient people living there with a large number of unmarried males," Letiecq tells me. "A lot of questionable activity. … Potential drug activity." He claims, though the resolution is not yet in place, that things have gotten better since its adoption. "Not all the way," he adds. "But they're improving."

Letiecq has a conservative coalition—at local, state, and national levels—at his back. Lawyers working for the Immigration Reform Law Institute, a Washington, D.C.–based organization, crafted the language for the county resolution during meetings with Letiecq and other members of his organization, Help Save Manassas. A member of that group,

JOE BRIER / LANDOV; OPPOSITE: JACQUELYN MARTIN / AP IMAGES

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John T. Stirrup Jr., who is also a supervisor on the Prince William County Board, eventually sponsored the resolution.

The Immigration Reform Law Institute is the legal arm of yet another organization, Federation for American Immigration Reform. FAIR has received funding from the Pioneer Fund, a group founded in the 1930s and known for its financing of research that examines whether blacks are genetically inferior to whites. The Ku Klux Klan also surfaced in Manassas in September, leaving around town flyers that warned of "'gangs, drugs and pornography' brought by immigrants."

The presence of the Klan, and the arrest of the armed protestor Tyler Froatz, who claims to be a member of the Herndon Minutemen, raises questions about the role of white supremacists, hate groups, and sociopaths in the controversy over undocumented immigrants. FAIR executives, as well as others on their side of the debate, make it clear they do not incorporate fringe elements or condone their actions. "Our SOPs [standard operating procedures] are very clear," Minutemen director Al Garza explains. "We do not practice carrying weapons at rallies."

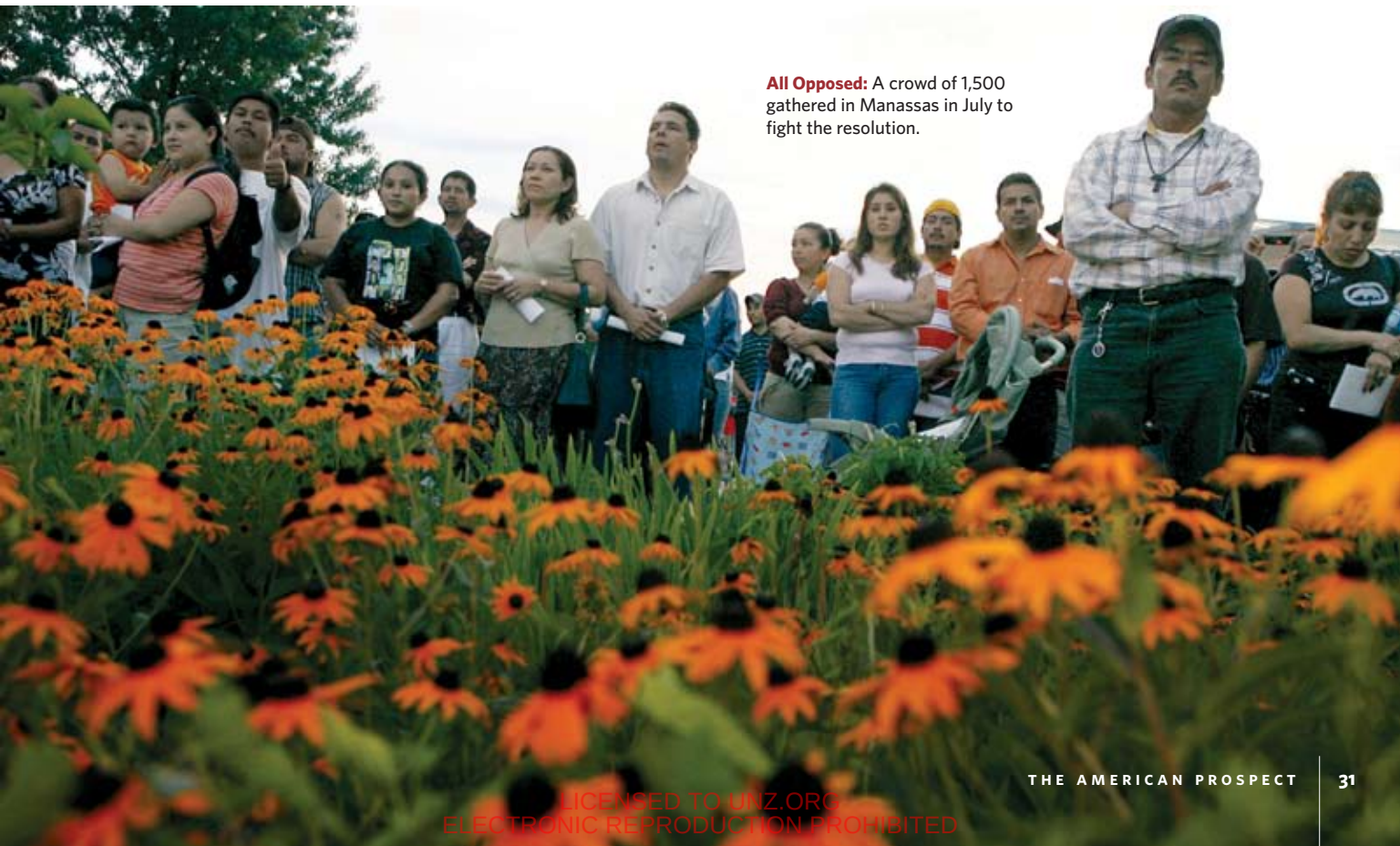
Letiecq says he is appalled by the presence of white supremacists in his neighborhood. Racist policies are contrary to the spirit of this country, he says, and the Klan is "not welcome here." The issue, he says, is "'legal' versus 'illegal'—who's got lawful presence and who doesn't. I'd be equally upset if it were a bunch of Canadians here." What gets him really worked up, though, is not so much the dark history of the Klan—though he touches on that. ("They should be embarrassed," he tells me.) Rather, it is the way Klansmen have tried to hone in on his political turf. Now *that* gets under his skin.

"It just pisses me off. Everyone feels compelled to call the Klan up and ask for their opinion," he says. "Who cares what those guys say? They haven't done anything. They never tried to make things better here. We're working double time, and these guys want to come in and coattail. We didn't need them before. We certainly don't need them now."

Keeping the fight clean of extremists is key for Republicans, who are hoping to capitalize on local anti-immigrant sentiment to win elections in the next cycle. "Things have turned mean for them," explains Larry J. Sabato, director of the University of Virginia's Center for Politics in Charlottesville. "They once controlled Virginia lock, stock, and barrel. That isn't true anymore. It's truly a competitive purple state." Hence, immigration. "Those communities that are now Democratic are concerned about immigration. Republicans see it as a way to get some of their votes back," he adds.

"We need to crack down on illegal immigration," says Prince William County Board of Supervisors Chairman Corey A. Stewart, a Republican. "My take is, 'Look, this is predominantly a federal issue, but we're on the front line.'" Stewart is a 39-year-old, Polo-clad attorney and a graduate of Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service. "My wife is a legal immigrant," he tells me. (She's from Sweden.) The day I meet him in his K Street office, he hands me a sheaf of papers from a Sept. 6 House Judiciary Committee immigration hearing at which he testified. "We've been getting dozens of phone calls," he says. "This has caught on like wildfire."

It is an unanswered question whether the Prince William County resolution, as well as similar efforts in other parts of the country, really will help Republicans gain traction. Sabato says the strategy will backfire at both the state and national



All Opposed: A crowd of 1,500 gathered in Manassas in July to fight the resolution.

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level. "The Latino vote is growing over time," he explains. "It's about twelve percent of the population but about six percent of the vote. That gap will close." The increasing clout of Hispanic voters, who lean heavily toward Democratic candidates, means conservative Republicans, especially those who support strict anti-immigration policies, will face resistance during election campaigns.

An executive vice president of the Service Employees International Union, Eliseo Medina, agrees. "There's a feeling that this community is under attack," Medina says, "and that a lot of it is being driven by the Republican Party. I think that, to their dismay, people are going to remember them at the polls."

Juarez's work may help ensure that's true. Juarez meets regularly with small business owners who serve mainly the immigrant community, and many have agreed to give out Mexicans Without Borders flyers in their restaurants and grocery stores. In addition to working 45 hours a week in construction, Juarez also gets out the word of his anti-resolution effort in Spanish-language newspapers and radio and television interviews. He's hardly alone. One volunteer, Yolanda Marilena Lemus, a 32-year-old administrative assistant at a homeowners' title company, says she convinced between 15 and 20 friends and family members to attend the September rally at the county government offices. "I personally said, 'You got to come to this,'" she tells me. Martin Bernal, the owner of El Nopal Grocery Store in Culpeper, says he helped drive 60 people in cars and vans from their homes in Culpeper to the rally.

Mexicans Without Borders has been urging its members to register to vote. Many, however, are non-citizens and cannot. Lacking political clout and a political constituency, Mexicans Without Borders leaders have begun to form informal ties with members of organizations such as the Virginia chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union; Tenants and Workers United, a grassroots organization committed to economic and social justice in Northern Virginia; and the Virginia Justice Center for Farm and Immigrant Workers.

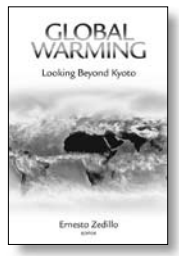
More importantly, because the resolution will likely be approved this fall, among Mexicans Without Borders members, judicial means to defeat the resolution are seen as an especially powerful tool. (Every time the word "lawsuit" came up at the rally protestors screamed wildly.) They have been talking with lawyers from the New York–based Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund, says legal coordinator Nancy Lyall. In October, a coalition including the Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund filed a lawsuit against the county contesting the constitutionality of the resolution. (The more established National Council of La Raza says it does not have formal ties with Mexicans Without Borders. "Some grassroots organizations choose certain tactics that other organizations do not feel comfortable with," says Flavia Jimenez, a Chicago-based senior policy analyst with La Raza. In other words, says Jimenez, "We're not litigators.")

Pro-resolution lawyers and activists are also prepared for a fight in court. Immigration Reform Law Institute lawyers have

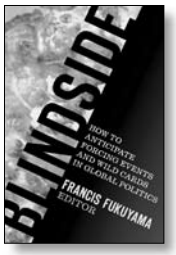
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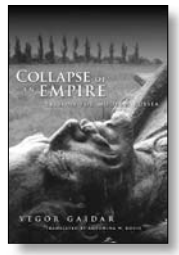
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worked with Letiecq, Stirrup, and others to ensure that carefully chosen language, designed to withstand potential litigation, is used in measures targeting illegal immigrants. The policies, including ordinances in Hazleton, Pennsylvania, which refused to allow illegal immigrants to live or work in that community, have attracted attention for elected officials. But the measures don't seem to stick. In July, a federal judge threw out the Hazleton ordinances, and in Missouri a judge struck down a resolution in Valley Park that had been designed to impose fines on property owners who rent to undocumented immigrants.

American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) lawyers had filed lawsuits in Hazleton and Valley Park, as well as in other parts of the country, to contest the measures. In all of the cases, says Omar Jadwat, a New York–based staff attorney who works for the ACLU's Immigrants' Rights Project, the measures were thrown out or scaled back because of the litigation.

"The general principle, constitutionally, is that immigration is the federal government's concern and state and local governments lack any kind of broad authority to act in the area of immigration," Jadwat explains. "If we're going to have a coherent national policy on immigration, we can't have a patchwork of laws."

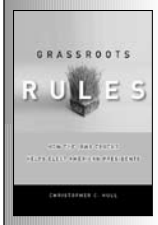
The resolution was passed unanimously in July, and most observers of the political process in Prince William County believe chances are high that the members of the county board will go forward with its plan. "I think their minds are already set," Carlos Aragon, 56, the general manager of Radio Fiesta, tells me. "They're going to pass the resolution." For that reason, a lawsuit seems like the most plausible option for people who are dissatisfied with it.

These days, Juarez meets with people who say they have been discriminated against in Northern Virginia—he carries around sheets of paper with dozens of their names and phone numbers in a worn leather satchel. He continues circulating among business owners and the media, and co-hosts meetings of hundreds of volunteers, which are held up to three times weekly during times of "crisis," as volunteer Steinbach puts it. As Juarez finishes his coffee, he looks tired (his eyes are bloodshot) and anxious about the work ahead of him. He says he believes groups like Help Save Manassas are "promoting hate and racism."

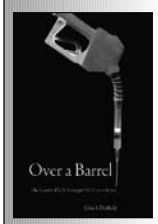
Lacking political clout and a political constituency, immigrants-rights groups are fighting back in the courts.

"The effect of the resolution is fear," he says. "It's affecting thousands, and people are leaving this county because of it. The risk is not from me—even though that is what people say. But liberty and civil rights *are* at risk. I am now afraid because they have taken that direction." **TAP**

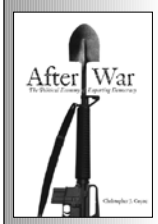
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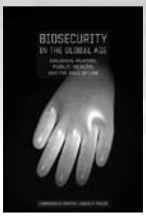
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Abolish the Air Force

What it does on its own—strategic bombing—isn't suited to modern warfare. What it does well—its tactical support missions—could be better managed by the Army and Navy. It's time to break up the Air Force.

BY ROBERT FARLEY

IN AUGUST OF THIS YEAR, REPORTS EMERGED THAT BRITISH Army officers in Afghanistan had requested an end to American airstrikes in Helmand Province because the strikes were killing too many civilians there. In Iraq, the Lancet Study of Iraqi civilian casualties of the war suggested that airstrikes have been responsible for roughly 13 percent of those casualties, or somewhere in the range of 50,000 to 100,000 deaths.

Does the United States Air Force (USAF) fit into the post–September 11 world, a world in which the military mission of U.S. forces focuses more on counterterrorism and counterinsurgency? Not very well. Even the new counterinsurgency manual authored in part by Gen. David H. Petraeus, specifically notes that the excessive use of airpower in counterinsurgency conflict can lead to disaster.

In response, the Air Force has gone on the defensive. In September 2006, Maj. Gen. Charles Dunlap Jr. published a long article in *Armed Forces Journal* denouncing "boots on the ground zealots," and insisting that airpower can solve the most important problems associated with counterinsurgency. The Air Force also recently published its own counterinsurgency manual elaborating on these claims. A recent op-ed by Maj. Gen. Dunlap called on the United States to "think creatively" about airpower and counterinsurgency—and proposed striking Iranian oil facilities.

Surely, this is not the way the United States Air Force had planned to celebrate its 60th anniversary. On Sept. 18, 1947, Congress granted independence to the United States Army Air Force (USAAF), the branch of the U.S. Army that had coordinated the air campaigns against Germany and Japan.

But it's time to revisit the 1947 decision to separate the Air Force from the Army. While everyone agrees that the United States military requires air capability, it's less obvious that we need a bureaucratic entity called the United States Air Force. The independent Air Force privileges airpower to a degree unsupported by the historical record. This bureaucratic structure has proven to be a continual problem in war fighting, in procurement, and in estimates of the costs of armed conflict. Indeed, it would be wrong to say that the USAF is an idea whose time has passed. Rather, it's a mistake that never should have been made.

Before 1947, aviation existed as a branch (if a large and privileged one) of the Army, alongside the infantry, artillery, and armor branches. To win autonomy, the Air Force needed to demonstrate that it could make a significant independent contribution to victory.

At the beginning of the U.S. involvement in World War II, Gen. Henry "Hap" Arnold, commander of the Army Air Force, decided that the Air Force would join Britain's Royal Air Force in the Combined Bomber Offensive against Germany. Over the next three years, American and British airmen would suffer appalling losses against German air defenses in a strategic bombing campaign designed to destroy German civilian morale and industrial capacity. The campaign expanded to Japan after Pacific bases became available. The USAAF also conducted a number of other missions, but its chiefs believed that strategic bombing would win the war for the Allies—and independence for the Air Force.

This desire for independence drove the behavior of the USAAF during the war. By late 1944, a submarine blockade had stymied Japanese war production. Because of the ineffectiveness of attacks on industry, and the flammability of Japanese cities, Gen. Curtis LeMay, mastermind of the strategic bombing campaign against Japan, decided that civilian areas would be the objective of his B-29s. Roughly 1 million Japanese civilians died from the fire-bombing of Japanese cities, though it was the incineration of so many square miles of Japanese city that the Army Air Force pointed to as it adduced clear, quantitative results in its fight for independence. LeMay would later head the Strategic Air Command, and serve as chief of staff of the Air Force during the Cuban Missile Crisis, in which he argued for a full set of airstrikes against Cuban targets.

During World War II, the USAAF also engaged in tactical air support and anti-submarine warfare missions, but these involved tight integration with either the Army or the Navy, and thus couldn't justify an independent service; only strategic bombing could do that. In the immediate postwar years, the USAAF fought bitter battles with the Army, the Navy, and the

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Royal Air Force over the evaluation of the strategic bombing campaign. The campaigns had plainly failed to destroy German or Japanese morale, so the arguments turned to an assessment of Axis industrial output. Although academic disputes continue, the historical consensus is that the campaign inflicted damage on the Axis powers, but not to the degree expected prior to the conflict. Nevertheless, by emphasizing its strategic bombing mission, the Army Air Force managed to win independence from the Army and become the third military service.

After 1947, the USAF believed that strategic airpower could decide wars, whether global or local. Destruction of enemy will and industrial capacity through conventional or nuclear means would result in victory. Control over nuclear weapons passed to the Air Force because of the connection of such weapons with the concept of strategic bombing.

Ground support also fell under the purview of the new Air Force. However, the Air Force did not take to this mission with the same enthusiasm it exhibited for strategic bombing. Ground support inherently involved collaboration with the Army and consequently subjection to Army aims. Autonomy and the glory of victory would go to the Army, rather than to the Air Force. Still, the Air Force ensured that it would have a role in ground support operations through the 1947 Key West Agreement, which mandated that fixed-wing aircraft would remain under Air Force, rather than Army, control.



Bombs Over Germany: USAAF bomber attacking Ludwigshaven plant, 1944

HULTON-DEUTSCH COLLECTION / CORBIS

The assumptions undergirding strategic bombing have changed since 1947. The Air Force no longer advocates firebombing enemy cities. Its strategic focus has shifted away from attacking the enemy's civilian morale and toward attacking industrial capacity and infrastructure. Most recently, the Air Force has embraced "Effects Based Operations," or military operations designed to produce political consequences.

Unfortunately, the Air Force has had a poor strategic record. In the Korean War, heavy strategic attacks on North Korean cities failed to reduce Communist capabilities. Operation Rolling Thunder—the campaign designed to destroy North Vietnamese will, transport capacity, and industry—went on for three years and had little noticeable effect on the course of that war. The strategic air component of Operation Desert Storm failed to topple Saddam Hussein or dislodge him from Kuwait. Even the 2003 "Shock and Awe" campaign did not destroy the Hussein regime, or reduce its capacity to communicate internally or externally.

Arguably, airpower did succeed on its own in bringing victory in the 1999 Kosovo War. For 78 days, the NATO alliance bombed Serbian military and infrastructure targets in order to force Serbia's withdrawal from the province of Kosovo. After increasingly serious threats of a ground invasion and the end of Russian support, Serbia succumbed to the NATO occupation of Kosovo. Even acknowledging the decisiveness of the airstrikes, however, the ability of a small country to stand against the world's most powerful military alliance for almost three months does not speak well of the coercive capacity of modern airpower.

In response to such critiques, Air Force supporters have blamed the constraints placed on strategic air campaigns by U.S. civilian leadership. Despite the fact that the United States dropped over 850,000 tons of bombs on North Vietnam during Operation Rolling Thunder (some 350,000 more tons than were dropped on Japan in World War II), LeMay argued that the offensive failed because of inadequate use of force, and that the threat of an even more extensive strategic bombing campaign against North Vietnam in 1965 would have won the war. This echoed similar complaints about limiting the use of airpower in the Korean War to targets on the Korean peninsula. The same arguments were trotted out again in refuting the allegations of uncertain performance of airpower in Kosovo. At least in the cases of Vietnam and Korea, historians have not tended to back these arguments.

On the other hand, the United States Air Force has made important tactical contributions to U.S. war efforts. In the first Gulf War, American and British airpower destroyed roughly a third of deployed Iraqi vehicles prior to the advance of U.S. ground forces. In Vietnam, Operations Linebacker I and II, directed primarily against North Vietnamese military forces, helped stop their advance into South Vietnam and bring the North back to the peace table. The Air Force also performed very well in support of the Northern Alliance during the war in Afghanistan, and helped destroy much Iraqi hardware in the opening stages of the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq.

This has created an odd situation. The Air Force is most effective when operating in support of the Army, and least effective when carrying out its own independent campaign. However, the Air Force dislikes ground support. Its antipathy to tactical missions, for instance, is at the root of its repeated efforts to shed itself of the A-10 Warthog. The A-10 is a slow attack aircraft, extremely effective against tactical enemy targets. The

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Army loves the A-10, but because the aircraft contributes neither to the air superiority mission that the Air Force favors nor to the strategic mission that provides its raison d'etre, the Air Force has always been lukewarm toward the aircraft. Offers on the part of the Army to take over the A-10 have been rejected, however, as this would violate the Key West Agreement.

If strategic bombing won independence for the Air Force, yet strategic bombing cannot win wars, it's unclear why the Air Force should retain its independence. To be sure, institutional inertia works in its favor. The efforts of Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara to force the services to compete against one another for procurement funds in the 1960s resulted, ironically, in a deep reluctance on the part of the services to question one another. This interservice collusion persists to the present day, in spite of changes in the nature of the threats the U.S. faces. This has helped lead to such absurdities as the continued procurement of the F-22 Raptor, an aircraft whose sole purpose is the destruction of advanced enemy fighter planes, during the course of two counter-insurgency conflicts against low-tech enemies.

Moreover, the presence of the Air Force in the high councils of war and peace tends to provide presidents with predictions of quick and easy military victories. Advocates of airpower have been making such cases since the run-up to World War II. Though these prophecies have been proven false time and again, they nevertheless remain attractive to civilian leaders who fear public disillusionment with casualties, and who wish to go to war while resisting the dangers of full military involvement. Airpower advocates offer military power on the cheap; the wars they lay out entail few casualties and many spectacular successes. These advocates would continue to exist in the absence of the Air Force, of course, but situating them within organizations of broader strategic views would probably reduce the force of their arguments.

Having an independent Air Force requires using that independent Air Force, whether or not it fits the particular conflict.

Besides, having an independent Air Force requires using that independent Air Force, whether or not its mode of warmaking fits the particular conflict. The existence of several separate services creates a competitive need to act during war. Each service wishes to demonstrate that it can contribute, thus justifying future procurement. Unfortunately, this produces a situation in which force is allocated to meet bureaucratic necessity rather than strategic need. Although we won't have a complete picture until full campaign histories are written, the need to produce work for the Air Force in Iraq and Afghanistan has probably led to overuse of airpower. Bureaucratic necessity doesn't fully explain excessive airstrikes, but it is likely a contributing factor.

There's a better way to use American airpower. The Army and the Navy can accomplish the jobs that the Air Force does well within their current institutional structures. Tactical airpower should belong to the Army. Although the Army and the Air Force have worked out credible systems of cooperation, reunifying the two would likely result in tighter collaboration between air and ground forces. The tactical mission would also include air superiority, which is necessary to prevent enemy use of airspace and to allow freedom of action for U.S. forces. Similarly, some tactical elements of airpower would pass to the Marine Corps.

To the extent that the United States requires a capability to punish other states militarily for political purposes, the Navy can handle the job. The aircraft carriers of the Navy already represent the most powerful concentration of mobile military power in the world. Navy cruise missiles, launched from submarines and surface vessels, can strike most of the surface of the Earth within a couple of hours. Adding certain elements of the Air Force portfolio to the Navy would neither transform nor hinder the Navy's power projection mission.

The strategic nuclear capability of the Air Force should also go to the Navy. The USN already operates its own strategic deterrent in the form of the Ohio-class ballistic missile submarines, armed with the Trident missile. The Navy could also operate the other two legs of the nuclear triangle (ICBMs and strategic bombers) without difficulty, especially since the latter would support the Navy's strategic mission.

We aren't likely to see the end of the United States Air Force anytime soon, however. The institutional structure of the Air Force would resist its absorption into the Army and the Navy; friends of the Air Force in Congress and the public would fight to prevent consolidation. Strong proponents of the "Air Force way of war" remain, and aren't convinced by "boots on the ground zealots." The Air Force would fight very hard to stay independent.

The consolidation of the services, of course, is no panacea for military difficulties. In spite of the formal unification of Israel's military forces, for instance, the Israel Defense Forces last summer embarked on a poorly planned strategic air campaign against Hezbollah and its Lebanese supporters. Israeli air attacks destroyed Lebanese infrastructure and killed Lebanese civilians without dealing serious damage to Hezbollah.

Nevertheless, the idea of an independent air force was not handed down on Mount Sinai. We have institutions because we've built them. When these institutions outlive their usefulness or fail as experiments, we can take them apart. In a post–September 11 world, we live with threats quite different from those that the Soviet arsenal used to pose. We can and should devise uses and a bureaucratic structure for American airpower better suited to our current challenges than those set out in 1947. **TAP**

Robert Farley *is an assistant professor at the Patterson School of Diplomacy and International Commerce, University of Kentucky.*

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Tomorrow, the World

Flush with cash and ancient hatreds, American evangelicals are incubating a Christian right in secular Europe.

BY JOSHUA KURLANTZICK

IN THE ISOLATED SWEDISH ISLAND VILLAGE OF BORGHOLM, on a summer day in 2003, the Rev. Ake Green stepped to the front of his Pentecostal congregation. On this desolate isle, cut off from the mainland and dotted with ruins of a towering stone fortress, Green's church normally attracted few followers; at this service he addressed fewer than 100 people. The conservative preacher, a taciturn figure with a crown of white hair on his balding dome, and a stern, lined face, delivered a searing message. "Sexually twisted people will rape animals," Green thundered. "Sexual abnormalities," including homosexuality, he said, citing Leviticus, are "a deep cancerous tumor in the entire society."

Green's fiery sermon attracted attention throughout Sweden, which has laws against hate speech and maintains some of Europe's most liberal statutes on gay rights. Mainstream Swedish Christian leaders roundly condemned Green. Soon he was sentenced under Sweden's hate-speech laws to a month in jail.

Quickly, a network of American Christian conservative groups, many of which already had connections in Sweden, swung into action to fight his sentence, transforming a small-town preacher into a cause célèbre. Samuel Ericsson, founder of Advocates International, a Virginia-based organization that trains Christian lawyers worldwide and has some 30,000 lawyers in its network, heard about Green's case and connected Advocates-trained lawyers with Green's counsel. They were joined by other American Christian groups, like the Alliance Defense Fund, an Arizona-based Christian legal organization with teams of lawyers and more than $25 million in revenue.

Bringing their muscle and financial resources, these lawyers helped Green develop a sophisticated defense, portraying the preacher as a victim of persecution. They attended his trial, filed their own legal briefs, lobbied Swedish diplomats around the world, and brought the case to the attention of the European Court of Human Rights. "Advocates International considers the prosecution ... of Pentecostal Pastor Ake Green to be one of the greatest threats to the freedom of religious expression of any current case in the world," noted an Advocates brief.

Advocates International also launched a broad public relations offensive that targeted sympathetic press and Swedish parliamentarians. Its primary message: Sweden would never be able to set a moral example for the world if it punished a pastor, even one who ran afoul of hate-speech laws. Sympathetic articles by lawyers from the U.S., Canada, Portugal, and Bulgaria appeared in the Swedish press.

Green's defenders won the day—Sweden's Supreme Court ultimately tossed out his case, causing jubilation among major American conservative organizations. "I have no doubt that the man in the street, public opinion in Sweden, had an impact—and I think we impacted public opinion in Sweden," Ericsson remembers triumphantly. "It was a case study of how we work."

For many progressive activists in Sweden, the engagement of America's powerful Christian right came as a surprise. But it shouldn't have. Over the past 10 years, American Christian conservatives, once focused on the U.S., have begun to take the culture wars global, developing networks of like-minded activists worldwide, delving into legal battles overseas, and taking with them the scorched-earth tactics that have worked so well in the United States. As the Christian right has expanded its base in America, it has secured more resources with which to venture abroad. And as evangelical Christianity and other conservative religious movements gain force in Europe, the American right is finding more allies on the Continent. Cumulatively, their victories may be changing the global climate on some of the biggest social issues of our time.

AFTER YEARS OF ISOLATION FROM THE WORLD, AMERICA'S CHRISTIAN right began, roughly a decade ago, to engage internationally. It started with the United Nations, which Christian conservatives feared would establish progressive international norms on reproductive rights, gay rights, cloning, and other issues.

With their highly organized, confrontational style, these groups took the genteel U.N. by surprise. One group, the Catholic Family and Human Rights Institute, created in 1997, began releasing "Friday faxes," which it sent to some 50,000 subscribers summarizing the right's concerns about the U.N. and helping to create message discipline. Other groups trained young activists to canvas U.N. delegates at conferences, con-

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BERTIL ERICSON / AP IMAGES

Ice and Brimstone: Hate-speaking Pentecostal pastor Ake Green stands before a banner in his support outside the Supreme Court in Stockholm, Sweden, in November 2005.

Over the past 10 years, American Christian conservatives, once focused on the U.S., have begun to take the culture wars global.

duct media outreach, and pack hearing rooms. (A study by Religion Counts, a group of religious scholars, found that at one U.N. meeting, conservative groups tried to get some 350 individuals accredited.) "Europeans and Canadians really had a hard time understanding how the Christian right works—their effective advocacy, training of young people, their language of values, how they out-message other guys," says Jennifer Butler, author of *Born Again: The Christian Right Globalized*.

The right also toned down attacks in favor of a soothing message. This message did not denigrate feminism but instead emphasized family values and suggested that the West did not understand developing nations' commitment to the family. This message allowed the Christian right to build close links to Catholic Latin American states like Costa Rica, to the bloc of Islamic countries, and to the Vatican.

And they've had considerable success. In 1994, longtime U.N.–watcher Barbara Crossette notes in a report for the Hewlett Foundation, participants in the U.N. conference on population and development agreed that global development relied on the expansion of women's rights, including liberalizing access to reproductive health services and removing government barriers to contraception. Yet six years later, the U.N.'s new Millennium Development Goals did not reflect all of those same rights the international body had promoted. This was not an accident. Several U.N. insiders told the *Prospect* that Christian-right organizations had pulled together a bloc of states to prevent the progressive ideas of the 1990s from ever being institutionalized. In fact, one observer said that many progressives at the U.N. now fear holding a new round of global conferences on women's rights because they are convinced conservatives could scuttle any progressive agenda.

What started at the U.N. has now expanded. Many of the issues are the same, but the battle has swung to Europe and Canada. "Christian groups now see Europe as the crossroads, the main venue for conflict, replacing the U.N.," says Allan Carlson, founder of the World Congress of Families, a network of conservatives.

This May, many of the same groups that fought the U.N. wars gathered again. This time, more than 1,000 conservative advocates huddled in Warsaw for three days in the towering Palace of Culture and Science, a Polish Stalinist dream of a building. Inside, at the World Congress of Families, representatives of powerful American groups like Focus on the Family and the Family Research Council created strategies with activists from around the world.

The World Congress of Families, which started in 1997, has met four times in the past decade. The congress was designed, in its own words, in response to the "militantly anti-family ethos prevalent in the 'post modern' West." This year, the body decided to focus on Europe because, the organizers claimed, "Europe is almost lost to a demographic winter and to secularists." "We see a battle brewing in the EU over the future of family policy," says Carlson. Rather than just hearing speeches, the congress taught attendees how to fight. For three days, participants met in breakout sessions teaching them how to influence political debate on the ground, like advocating for "pro-family" tax policies and learning how to interpret laws to favor home schooling in Europe.

AS IN THE U.S. AND AT THE U.N., THE WORLD CONGRESS MAY PROVE effective thanks to a growing and impressive global network of like-minded activists in Europe. Several Christian conservative groups have started training sessions on the Continent, teaching young generations of European lawmakers, lawyers, and activists how to pursue American-style messaging, youth training, and advocacy.

The International Human Rights Group, a Christian

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conservative organization, runs many seminars for European lawyers. Its president, Joel Thornton, says these seminars help European activists, historically reticent on religion, "learn how to bring their faith into politics." They also focus on winning key cultural debates, from abortion to home schooling. The European Center for Law and Justice and Regent University, the American college established by Pat Robertson, also run training programs in Strasbourg, France, for lawyers around the globe.

In Canada, another historically secular nation, American Christian groups assist lawyers and activists, with James Dobson's powerful Focus on the Family operating a Canadian affiliate that fights in Canadian courts. Advocates International, founder Ericsson says, will have some 1,500 lawyers from around the world at their next major meeting. "In 1991, there were only two countries I know of, the U.S. and Canada, that had Christian lawyer groups active in the public square," he says. "Today, we have almost 100 countries with active [Christian] lawyer groups engaged in the public square." Many of those groups received Advocates training.

Meanwhile, the National Right to Life Committee, one of America's most prominent anti-abortion groups, says it has helped support 200 chapters of an anti-abortion movement in Sweden. The group also has built ties to the Parliamentary Forum for Family and Human Values, a Swedish interparliament working group that tries to bring Christian values into government. The Forum has brought in American conservatives to help hone Swedish MPs' messaging.

In all of these advocacy efforts, there's a consistent throughline, one that echoes American advocacy: that conservatives stand up for little people against an oppressive, aggressively secular majority, and that average Europeans are the victims of the Continent's embrace of diversity. That message jibes with other warnings over the last decade, especially those from European religious leaders and the Pope, that the Continent is losing its faith. The strategy also can appeal to recent immigrants, who have less experience with Europe's secular traditions. In Sweden, says Soren Juvas of the Swedish Federation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Rights, a group that fought the right on the Green case, immigrants have become much more vocal on issues like gay rights, and Swedish conservative parties now make a broader play for their support. The immigrants have clout: Foreign-born residents or people with one foreign-born parent now comprise roughly one-fifth of Sweden, for example, making them a powerful political force.

The appeal, of course, is nuanced for a European audience. "The right sees that you can't be so blunt in Europe—what works is messages appealing to Europeans' fears that family is breaking down, that Europe is losing its way on cultural issues," says Juvas. "Rather than just demonizing gays, they emphasize children's needs for both a father and a mother, a softer type of approach." Juvas laughs wryly. "Before, they'd say they are just totally opposed to gays and lesbians, and now they'd say they are not against, but they are for preserving better family life."

THERE ARE SEVERAL REASONS WHY THE CHRISTIAN right is now turning to Europe. First of all, it can: Compared with three decades ago, American Christian conservative groups now have the finances to wage global battle. Focus on the Family, for one, now has some $140 million in global revenues. More importantly, Carlson of the World Congress of Families says, the European Union embodies a strong voice for secularism on cultural and sex issues, and so represents an important target. The EU and, to a lesser extent, Canada, also have major global presences and aid programs, so they can spread their message and values, and form alliances with American liberal organizations. "The American Civil Liberties Union and its allies had been active in Europe for a generation ... we were very much playing catch-up there," says Benjamin Bull, chief counsel of the Alliance Defense Fund.

Meanwhile, over the past five years courts in America have started to factor European judges' decisions into their thinking. In the landmark 2003 *Lawrence v. Texas* case, the Supreme Court struck down a Texas anti-sodomy law using decisions by the European Court of Human Rights to support its ruling. Several months later, Massachusetts' highest court allowed gay marriage, again citing foreign courts' rulings in making its decision.

"The idea [in setting up in Europe] was to establish a critical body of jurisprudence that would have an impact there and also at home [in America]," says Jay Sekulow, chief counsel of the European Center for Law and Justice (ECLJ), an offshoot of the American Center for Law and Justice, where he is also chief counsel. ACLJ is a powerful conservative organization with more than $50 million in assets. Sekulow was one of four conservative legal experts, dubbed the "four horsemen," who met regularly to advise President Bush on legal decisions, including Supreme Court picks.

At the same time, the decline of Europe's traditional state churches has given rise to a new wave of European evangelical churches and European Muslim organizations, both of which draw upon recent immigrants, according to Philip Jenkins, a professor of religious studies and history at Pennsylvania State University, in his new book *God's Continent: Christianity, Islam and Europe's Religious Crisis*. Evangelical churches are growing in historically secular France, and new ones are springing up from Sweden to Germany. And leaders of Eastern Bloc states, which are generally more religious than the rest of Europe, tend to be more open than other European leaders to the Christian Right.

"We have a conservative period now in history—a substantial movement to the right around the world," says James Paul, executive director of the Global Policy Forum in New York and a prominent thinker on the globalization of the Christian right. Paul argues that democratic/socialist governments around the world, particularly in Europe, are failing to deliver on their promises of growth and social welfare. "The Christian conservatives know this, they're in the ascendancy, and they want to consolidate their power while they have a chance in Europe and the U.N."

On a continent where even mainstream leaders worry about

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Europe's demographic decline and lack of coherent values, the Christian right's message can resonate. And one of the issues they are trumpeting is home schooling. In Germany, Thornton's International Human Rights Group, Sekulow's European Center for Law and Justice, and other allies have taken up more than a dozen court cases dealing with home schooling. Home schooling is technically illegal in Germany, and they are pushing for parents' right to pull their kids out of state schools. Largely, their message highlights how a secular German government has victimized these parents.

Much of this effort, Thornton explains, follows American Christians' model of working at local and state levels; as they win over individual politicians and judges, he says, they expect to be able to bring home-schooling demands to national prominence in Germany. Earlier this year, in one of the most prominent cases in Germany, Thornton and his local allies fought for a girl named Melissa Busekros to be released from a psychiatric hospital, where she'd been confined by the state because, the state said, being home-schooled had delayed her development and caused emotional disturbances. Home-schooling activists claimed that in fact the government simply was targeting home schooling, and called the girl a "hostage" of the government. Advocates got her story into the German media, major Christian newswires around the world, blogs, and television programs like Pat Robertson's *700 Club*, which encouraged viewers to lobby the German authorities. Christian groups from around the world also lobbied the German authorities on her behalf and even organized a boycott of German goods until she was released from the hospital.

According to *The Christian Science Monitor*, Thornton's group and an affiliate it set up in Europe helped get the German state of Bavaria to allow disciples of Twelve Tribes, a controversial American evangelical group called a cult by some of its ex-members, to set up its own school, which would teach theories—like creationism—not sanctioned by the government. Meanwhile, Carlson says American and Czech participants in the World Congress of Families united to help win the battle on home schooling in the Czech Republic, where some lawmakers had wanted to pass legislation severely restricting home education. The groups "visited with members of parliament, brought stats on why this is good for children," he says. "That helped lead to a Czech law allowing home schooling."

American groups have fought other legal battles on the Continent, again highlighting the status of conservatives and Christians as besieged minorities. ECLJ and other groups have helped battle French statutes that might limit evangelicals' missionary activity. "In Europe, you have a fear of the evangelical community, like with the sect law in France" that limits missionary work, says Thornton.

On gay marriage, too, the Christian right is pushing back against what seemed like a Continental trend toward more progressive legislation. As Sweden gears up for a fight over whether to allow gay couples even more rights, Juvas says, conservatives are using their outreach to immigrants to block full marriage privileges.

In Poland, a country where America's Christian right has established deep ties to local churches and political leaders, the government has refused to accept the part of Europe's Charter of Fundamental Rights, which outlaws discrimination against gays and lesbians. Poland's deputy education minister even recently called for a law punishing teachers for promoting "homosexual propaganda" and vowed to fire openly gay educators. European politicians have criticized these efforts, and the Christian right has used its message machine to strike back. At the World Congress of Families, Christian organizations provided a platform for Polish politicians including Minister of Education Roman Giertych, who vowed not to give in to the Charter of Fundamental Rights. Christian groups also launched "Homosexual Hands off Poland," a petition to the European Parliament vowing to fight "a blatant attempt to bully the people of Poland." So far, it's worked: Backed by their global allies, the Polish government has refused to give ground to the EU.

Of course, what happens in Europe doesn't stay in Europe. In recent years, Europe has become the world standard on many social issues, dominating the international debate on euthanasia, gay marriage, and many other contentious issues. Quickly, European decisions on these issues come to define Western standards. "In 2001, the Netherlands was debating same-sex marriage, and we were laughing at it," says Thornton of the International Human Rights Group. "Six years later [gay marriage] is one of the biggest fights in America. Gay-rights advocates couldn't get traction in America ... and their movement got traction in Europe and the issue rebounded back in America."

On a continent where leaders worry about decline and lack of coherent values, the Christian right's message can resonate.

During the Bush administration, this effort has had a serious impact. "By taking on the U.N., the [Christian] right stopped the U.N. from pushing for these progressive issues, and now under the Bush administration the U.N. and the U.S. don't take a stand on any of these," says *Born Again* author Jennifer Butler. "If they can get the EU countries even to be less aggressive, there will basically be no one standing up on this."

It's all a long way from 10 years ago, when Thornton remembers finding almost no one in Europe who understood how to win the culture wars. Now, the Christian right has done well enough in the Old World that it is looking for new, even less hospitable lands. "The next logical place for us is the Middle East, and we'll also be able to have an impact," says Sekulow of the European Center for Law and Justice. "We will succeed there, too." **TAP**

Joshua Kurlantzick *is a senior correspondent for* The American Prospect.

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Culture & Books

"Two questions have haunted liberals: Why do Republicans keep winning? And when will it end?"

— PAGE 51



Threat Level Red: Vigilante justice in *Black Summer* #0 by Warren Ellis, art by Juan Jose Ryp

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GRAPHIC NOVELS

THE REVOLT OF THE COMIC BOOKS

America's superheroes take on preemptive war, torture, warrantless spying, and George W. himself.

BY JULIAN SANCHEZ

A SUPERHERO KILLED THE PRESident this summer. Moments later, a shocked White House press corps watched as John Horus, his gleaming white-and-gold costume still soaked in blood, explained why. Because "the war in Iraq is illegal and predicated on lies," because "our people and theirs are dying for corporate gain," because of the "use of torture by our elected authorities," and because the president "stole the last two elections," the most powerful member of the Seven Guns could no longer "stand by while this administration commits crimes." In response, a terrified government imposed martial law, launching a nationwide manhunt for Horus' estranged teammates, whose reactions to the act ranged from horror to sympathy.

That bit of propaganda-by-the-deed launched acclaimed British scribe Warren Ellis' *Black Summer*, an eight-issue comic book miniseries from Avatar Press. And though heroes at industry giants DC Comics and Marvel have shown more restraint—even after *Superman*'s Lex Luthor won the Oval Office in 2000—the post–September 11 era has seen an explosion of politically themed storylines in mainstream as well as independent comics. While real-world presidential candidates invoke supercop Jack Bauer, of the TV series *24*, as a guide to national security policy, a more nuanced debate about preemptive war, warrantless surveillance, and the responsibility that comes with great power is taking place in an illustrated universe.

In one sense, this is nothing new. The very first issue of *Captain America* (1941) showed the star-spangled super-soldier punching out Adolf Hitler, prompting criticism from both Nazi sympathizers and those who considered *der Führer* Europe's problem. Superman and Batman hawked war bonds while facing down monstrous racist caricatures of buck-toothed Japs. Frank Miller's *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns* and Alan Moore's *Watchmen*—works that transformed comics in 1986 by proving that illustrated tales of men in tights could be serious, adult art—were both steeped in their Cold War milieu. (Moore took his title from the Roman poet Juvenal's famous query about political power: "Who watches the watchmen?")

Nevertheless, the politically inspired stories of the "War on Terror" era have been remarkable not only for their ubiquity and sophistication, but also in the way they have exposed—and sometimes exploded—the political ideas embedded in the superhero genre itself. A famous 2002 cover of the German news magazine *Der Spiegel* depicted members of

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Patriot Act: The hero protests government intrusion in *Amazing Spider Man* #536 by J. Michael Straczynski, art by Ron Garney.

the Bush cabinet dressed as Rambo, Batman, Conan the Barbarian, and the "warrior princess" Xena, suggesting that neoconservatism is just comic-book logic applied to international affairs. But the efforts of comics writers to grapple with current events raise a corollary question: Is the superhero a natural neocon?

Probably the most widely read of the recent crop of political comics has been Marvel's "Civil War," a massive 2006–2007 crossover story line spanning the company's main superhero titles. The story begins when the members of a young team of C-list heroes get a bit too big for their spandex and challenge a group of powerful supervillains living incognito in Stamford, Connecticut. The ensuing battle leaves more than 600 civilians dead, and public outcry prompts the hasty passage of the Superhuman Registration Act, which requires costumed heroes to be trained and licensed—and to disclose their secret identities to the government. The "powered community," heroic and villainous alike, is riven by the act: Iron Man and the Fantastic Four's stretchable supergenius Reed Richards rally support for registration, while Captain America goes rogue and begins building a dissident underground. The stand-in for the conflicted reader in this debate is Spider-Man, who is initially so convinced of the wisdom of registration that he unmasks on national television. When he sees the extradimensional Guantanamo being built to house resisters, however, he defects with a dramatic speech about the folly of trading liberty for security.

As the Abu Ghraib scandal unfolded in the news pages in 2004, the DC Comics universe found itself in the throes of *Identity Crisis*, in which it is revealed that a cabal of heroes affiliated with the Justice League superteam had been tampering with the memories of captured baddies to protect their own identities. An outraged Batman, who discovers that his own memory has been altered to cover up these acts, begins tracking superhumans via a vast satellite surveillance network—which, naturally, falls into the wrong hands. Meanwhile, the Arab antihero Black Adam overthrows the tyrannical leader of "Khandaq," then kills the entire population of Bialya in retaliation for a terrorist attack on his country.

Perhaps the most interesting thing about these stories is why they fail. For as much as they seek to tease out the complexity and moral ambiguity of their themes, the authors of most of these tales clearly mean to convey a liberal or civil libertarian message. So much so that

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in 2003, the Foundation for Defense of Democracies released a screed titled "The Betrayal of Captain America," by right-wing pundit Michael Medved, decrying leftist infiltration of comics; that same year, professional bluenose Brent Bozell of the Media Research Center condemned Superman as a Ba'athist sympathizer. Yet when these stories go beyond leftish imitations of a previous generation's simplistic propaganda comics, the allegories tend to collapse under the weight of their own internal contradictions. There are, of course, openly conservative comics—ranging from the ludicrous *Liberality for All* (starring a cyborg Sean Hannity!) to Bill Willingham's brilliantly layered *Fables*. But there is often a strong (if unintended) neoconservative subtext even in stories by left-leaning authors.

The "Civil War" storyline may provide the clearest illustration of this. The Superhero Registration Act is a straightforward analogue of the USA PATRIOT Act; the rhetoric of its opponents could have been cribbed from an ACLU brief. But under scrutiny, their civil libertarian arguments turn out to hold very little water in the fictional context. The "liberty" the act infringes is the right of



The Neo-Con Imagination: Hero Bigby Wolf explains that the human world's bulwark against invasion is just like beleaguered Israel in *Fables* #50 by Bill Willingham, art by Mark Buckingham.



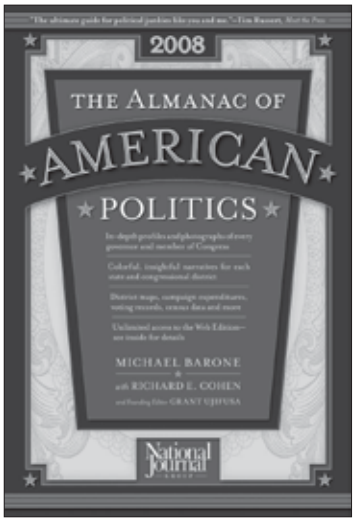
We Have Ways of Making You Talk: Arab anti-hero Black Adam "disarms" a suicide bomber, *52* #1, by Geoff Adams, Grant Morrison, Greg Rucka, and Mark Waid, art by Joe Bennett.

well-meaning masked vigilantes, many wielding incredible destructive power, to operate unaccountably, outside the law—a right no sane society recognizes. In one uneasy scene, an anti-registration hero points out that the law would subject heroes to lawsuits filed by those they apprehend. In another, registered hero Wonder Man is forced to wait *several whole minutes* for approval before barging into a warehouse full of armed spies from Atlantis. Protests about the law's threat to privacy ring a bit hollow coming from heroes accustomed to breaking into buildings, reading minds, or peering through walls without bothering to obtain search warrants. Captain America bristles at the thought of "Washington ... telling us who the supervillains are," but his insistence that heroes must be "above" politics amounts to the claim that messy democratic deliberation can only hamper the good guys' efforts to protect America. The putative dissident suddenly sounds suspiciously like Director of National Intelligence Mitch McConnell defending warrantless spying.

The problem of modern terrorism—how to deal with small groups of individuals who can wreak the kind of destruction that once required an army—is familiar territory for comics, as is the idea that heroes often inadvertently create their own worst enemies. Yet attempts to directly address the problem of blowback from military action exhibit the same sort of ambiguity. In the second

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"Persons of Mass Destruction": An enemy superteam called "The Liberators" invades Washington in *The Ultimates 2* #10 by Mark Millar, art by Bryan Hitch.

volume of Marvel's *Ultimates* (2004–2007)—a reimagined version of the classic Avengers superteam—the heroes are being used to carry out covert military missions abroad. Their foreign interventions prompt governments hostile to the U.S. to send their own superteam ("persons of mass destruction" wryly dubbed "The Liberators") to invade Washington. After the inevitable victory, The Ultimates decide they must operate independently of the U.S. government, but the lesson remains that "the world needs looking after," presumably by the same mostly American heroes.

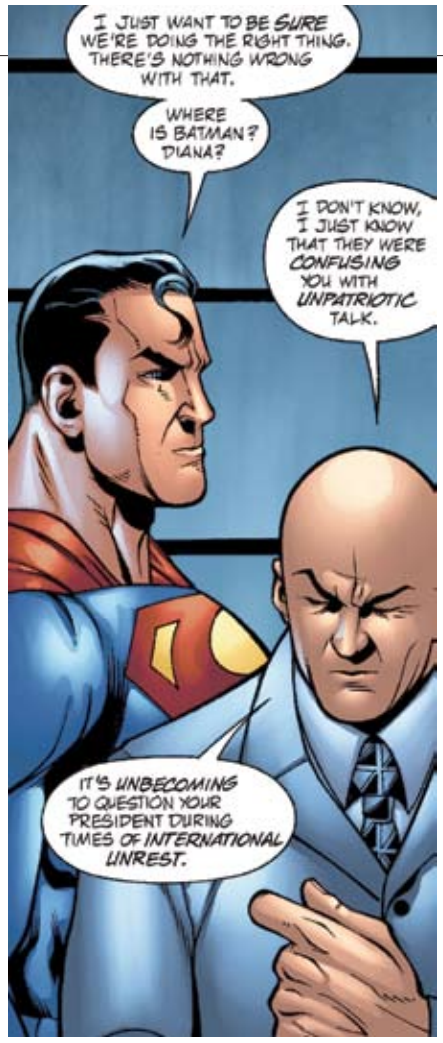
These mixed messages shouldn't be blamed (solely) on the comics' creators, though. As John Shelton Lawrence and Robert Jewett argue in their book *The Myth of the American Superhero*, the premises of the genre itself demand that "total power must be pictured as totally benign, transmuting lawless vigilantism into a perfect embodiment of law enforcement." The hero, possessed of moral clarity, solves problems by force, yet (usually) without killing. Evil is depicted as personal rather than institutional: The problem is not that power is wielded by a small elite, but that the wrong people—supervillains—sometimes get powers. And when the only tool you have is Thor's hammer, every problem looks like a supervillain. Superheroes don't form PACs; they have slugfests, because the narrative of the superheroic redeemer demands that more prosaic means of conflict resolution—diplomacy, say—prove ineffectual.

The simplest way for writers to escape the embedded politics of superheroism, of course, is by ditching the tights entirely. Brian K. Vaughan makes this rejection explicit by having Mitchell Hundred, the protagonist of *Ex Machina*, abandon his costumed identity as the hapless Great Machine to serve his fellow New Yorkers as mayor. And there are many spandex-free depictions of war in comics. Vaughan's simple but moving *Pride of Baghdad* follows a group of lions freed from an Iraqi zoo during an American bombing. (The liberated animals are eventually shot by frightened Coalition forces.) Rick Veitch lampoons the romanticization of war in *Army @ Love*, in which a Huxleyan Department of Motivation and Morale entices soldiers to fight in "Afbaghistan" by making conflict sexy and fun. Others, such as

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Shedding the Spandex: Above, Mitchell Hundred abandons his costumed identity to serve as mayor of New York in *Ex Machina*, by Brian K. Vaughan, art by Tony Harris. Right, President Lex Luthor is planning an invasion of "Qurac" in *JLA* #83 by Joe Kelly, art by Chris Cross.

Brian Wood in *DMZ* and Anthony Lappé in *Shooting War*, illustrate the old adage that "when war is declared, truth is the first casualty" by following journalists into spin-riddled battle zones.

Yet however much some writers may lament the popular identification of comics with superhero tales, it is no accident: Iconic characters demand a medium that deals in icons, and their privileged place in the American Zeitgeist has given them a mythic narrative power that storytellers are loath to forsake, even as they seek to tame the genre's fascist undertones. Some film adaptations of comic book tales—notably *Superman Returns*, *V for Vendetta*, and the first two Spider-Man films—have attempted to democratize their protagonist by creating populist moments in which ordinary citizens must band together to save the hero. But rather than conveying a message of democratic empowerment, these scenes typically have more than a whiff of *übermench*-as-embodiment-of-the-*volk* about them.

Mainstream titles increasingly feature stories in which the traditional Manichaeism of the genre is countered by pitting heroes against each other rather than villains, emphasizing how evil can arise from well-intentioned efforts to use coercive power for good ends: "Civil War" falls into this camp, as does DC's *Infinite Crisis* (2005–2006), in which a group of erstwhile heroes discover that their scheme to remake the universe into a utopia has transformed them into monsters. Other titles, following in the tradition of *Watchmen*, create doubly allegorical worlds populated by close analogues of the classic DC stable of heroes, then use them to explode or *detourn* the tropes of conventional superhero comics.

The failures and successes alike show that if comics are to succeed as modern political allegory, comics writers cannot simply transplant real controversies into their fictional worlds. They also face the daunting task of inventing a grammar and a vocabulary for a new sort of superhero narrative—one capable of telling us that, sometimes, great power comes with the responsibility to not use it. **TAP**

***Julian Sanchez** is a writer based in Washington, D.C., and a contributing editor for* Reason *magazine.*

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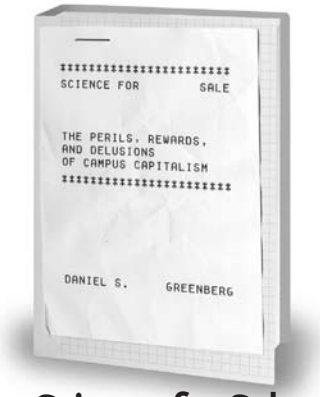
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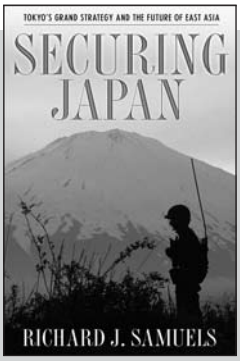
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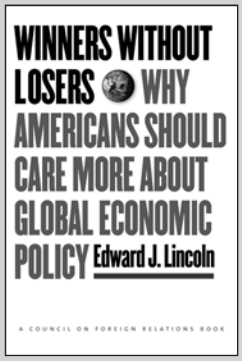
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FAITH IN THE CENTER?

GODLY REPUBLIC: A CENTRIST BLUEPRINT FOR AMERICA'S FAITH-BASED FUTURE BY JOHN J. DIIULIO JR., University of California Press, 310 pages, $24.95

BY ALAN WOLFE

Despite all the talk of America's culture war, this country has been blessed by an absence of bloody religious conflict; we've been spared anything like Europe's Thirty Years' War, and our most serious internal war involved race, not religion. To be sure, some of the clashes between Protestants and Catholics toward the end of the 19th century evoke a *Kulturkampf*, but they do not even come close to the troubles characteristic of the countries from which so many of our Protestants and Catholics originally came.

John DiIulio, the University of Pennsylvania professor who was the first head of President George W. Bush's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, believes Americans need reminding of the many ingenious ways this country avoided past divisive religious conflicts, so we can overcome current divisions in a sensible and moderate fashion.

DiIulio begins with the Founders, who he insists were neither non-believers nor zealots. Madison, the Founder whom DiIulio admires most, was "a committed Christian in the Reformed (or Protestant) tradition." At the same time, he was also responsible for such classics of religious liberty as "Memorial and Remonstrance" and the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. The republic Madison and his colleagues created was, in DiIulio's term, a godly one. It would have no monarch claiming to derive his political authority from God. But neither would it be without strongly entrenched moral ideas associated with religion in general and, it must be acknowledged, with Protestantism in particular.

It is common, especially among legal scholars, to lambaste the U.S. Supreme Court for its seeming inconsistencies on religion—ruling, for example, against providing tax-supported maps for Catholic schools but in favor of tax-supported books. Yet DiIulio thinks that the Court has by and large done a credible job trying to find the moderate middle. Like most conservatives, he objects to some of the more strict separationist decisions of a Hugo Black or William Brennan. But he chides Christian rightists for their irresponsible insistence that we live under a judicial tyranny imposed by liberal secularists. The Court generally comes down with the framework established by Madison, DiIulio argues, and that, it turns out, is also roughly where the American public lies.

The point of all this is to conclude that faith-based initiatives, the policy innovation with which DiIulio is so closely associated, also represent a middle point between the extremes. If we are to remain true to the godly side of our republic, we ought to recognize that religion is both central to people's identity and a valuable resource upon which policymakers can rely to promote justice and equality. But if we are also to be true to our republican tradition, we need to ensure that any such policies contain protections against religious discrimination and do not use public funds for explicit proselytizing. That is what Bush's faith-based initiative was supposed to be about, DiIulio tells us, but, alas, zealots from both the religious right and secular left helped undermine it. The real losers were the inner-city poor, toward whom DiIulio is eloquently compassionate and for whom he has tirelessly worked. If we were only willing to be a little more moderate in our debates over religion, we could, he believes, genuinely help people in desperate need, and our failure to do so is a cause for shame.

John DiIulio is a fascinating American.

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A working-class kid from South Philadelphia—also my home town—he can hold intelligent conversations with both policy wonks and political bosses. Once associated with hard-right approaches to crime and punishment, he has learned compassion from actual experience with the poor. A Democrat who has worked for the most partisan Republican president in our history, he became the first former insider to point out how fake the president's front was and then the first to apologize for his indiscretion. A Catholic, he is considered by evangelical Protestants to be one of them. Although capable of becoming a celebrity, he has chosen to publish his thoughts not with a commercial firm but with a university press, and he will be donating all his after-tax royalties to the charities with which he has worked. At a time of all too predictable politics, he is a pleasure to read and to know. (DiIulio serves on an American Political Science Association task force I chair on "Religion and Democracy in the United States.")

I agree with the broad outlines of DiIulio's argument but disagree with the way he frames it. The Founders, I would insist, were not orthodox Christians in any recognizable sense of the term; the system they established was more republican than godly; and the blame for the failure of moderation that both DiIulio and I would like to see lies more with the right, including President Bush, than with the left.

DiIulio's presentation of James Madison leaves me confused. It is true that Madison was a Presbyterian and a student of James Witherspoon, who can properly be called a Reformed, or Calvinist, Protestant. But Madison himself cannot be described that way. John Calvin, for one thing, created a theocracy in Geneva and was a strong advocate of church-state fusion; Madison's First Amendment prohibits anything like Geneva's Consistory monitoring people's private lives, regulating their marriages, and censoring their thoughts. And Madison was hardly alone. Our first handful of presidents were deists, about as far from orthodox religion as one could be at the time and still be considered serious, and the one who was not, John Adams, was a Unitarian who rejected the Trinity, without which there cannot be orthodox Protestantism. If we are to be faithful to our Founders today, we should not be seeking a position halfway between Pat Robertson and Americans United for Separation of Church and State but something that leans more toward the latter than the former.

DiIulio's account of the role of the U.S. Supreme Court, in contrast to his discussion of the Founders, is spot on. The Court has come in for far too much abuse in its First Amendment rulings. This is difficult, if not impossible, territory, and the Court has done its honest best to find middle ground; if you are inclined not to believe me, you should read Justice Scalia's decision in *Oregon v. Smith* upholding a ban on religious practices. The only problem we face in this area is that if the Court did swing too far to the left in the Warren years, it is on its way to moving too far to the right with the appointments of John Roberts and Samuel Alito. Moderation and compromise are not terms likely to characterize the Court's jurisprudence in the years to come.

The Founders were not orthodox Christians in any recognizable sense of the term, and the system they established was more republican than godly.

The heart of DiIulio's book concerns the controversy over faith-based initiatives, and his insider account is well worth reading. To some extent, we already know what took place inside the White House on this issue because DiIulio's former assistant, David Kuo, published *Tempting Faith*, his own version of the sheer cynicism the Bush administration showed toward its evangelical base. The key to understanding the whole controversy does not involve the idea of faith-based initiatives themselves; Bill Clinton sponsored legislation in this area called Charitable Choice, which allowed a role for religious groups in the provision of welfare, and Al Gore strongly endorsed such faith-based initiatives in the 2000 campaign. The key issue was always whether language would be included allowing discrimination and proselytizing. Key legislators, especially Sen. Joseph Lieberman, made it clear from the start that this would not happen.



ANNE-MARIE WEBER / CORBIS

But this is what Bush's base wanted; for them, legislation without the right to discriminate was no legislation at all. The U.S. House ramrodded such a policy through. Talks broke down. No legislation was forthcoming. Bush therefore used an executive order to create the office that DiIulio came to occupy.

It is difficult to read any account of these controversies without attributing most of the blame for the failure of the legislation to the right. Nonetheless convinced that Bush's heart was in the right place on this issue, DiIulio presents him as someone who wanted to find compromise but lost the battle. But this book adds even more details to the devastating picture painted by Kuo, reminding us of how Bush, to thunderous applause from his base of supporters, promised them what they wanted but did not include provisions allowing religious discrimination in his executive order. "Between 1996 and 2006," DiIulio writes, "despite good

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intentions in both cases, neither the Clinton administration nor the Bush administration had done much to forge partnerships with faith-based groups that measurably helped people in need. The only real difference was that, after the 2000 presidential election, issues like religious hiring rights begat partisan, inside-the-beltway battles in which the charitable choice consensus was often a near-fatal casualty and the needy people whom charitable choice was supposed to help were too often forgotten." Here is where DiIulio's centrist moderation, which I so greatly admire, fails him. One side was far more responsible for the failure to build on Bill Clinton's original initiative, and it was not Clinton's.

The United States will soon have a president not named Bush (although it may again have one named Clinton). With a new president, no matter the party, the issue of faith-based initiatives will likely re-emerge. DiIulio concludes with a powerful argument to the effect that, next time around, liberals should realize that they share common ground with religious conservatives on the need to help the poor. (He even urges that liberals recognize Charles Colson, the former Watergate inmate and now dedicated Christian, as a potential ally, and I happen to think he is right.) There may be good political advantages for liberals and Democrats to do so. But they also should do it because it is the right thing to do.

When I read John DiIulio writing about the poor, I feel inadequate, not only with respect to myself, but also with the liberal tradition that means so much to me. There are liberals who work tirelessly on behalf of the poor, and they often fail to receive the credit they should. But too many do not, while there is at least one person in this country who has worked for George W. Bush whose compassion can never be doubted. If there were more liberals who shared John DiIulio's passion for justice, liberalism would be better—and so would America. **TAP**

__Alan Wolfe__ is the director of the Boisi Center for Religion and American Public Life at Boston College and is writing a book on why liberalism matters.

Electing FDR

The New Deal Campaign of 1932

Donald A. Ritchie



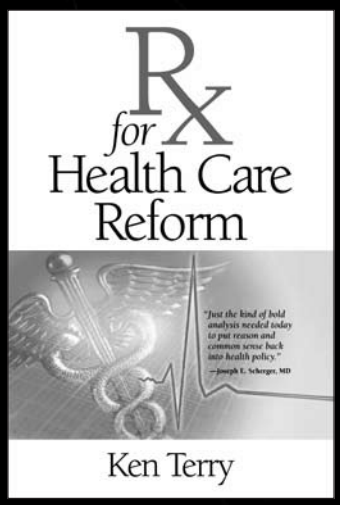
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BOOKS

WHY THEY WIN

THE BIG CON: THE TRUE STORY OF HOW WASHINGTON GOT HOODWINKED AND HIJACKED BY CRACKPOT ECONOMICS
BY JONATHAN CHAIT, Houghton Mifflin Company, 294 pages, $25.00

THE RIGHT TALK: HOW CONSERVATIVES TRANSFORMED THE GREAT SOCIETY INTO THE ECONOMIC SOCIETY
BY MARK A. SMITH, Princeton University Press, 267 pages, $29.95

BY RICHARD PARKER

For the past 30 years, two questions have haunted liberals: Why do Republicans keep winning? And when will it end? With the GOP's crusade for a permanent majority undoubtedly faltering, it's not hard to see why liberals are optimistic these days. Yet I don't share that optimism. The Republican Leviathan has been pronounced dead half a dozen times, and it's risen each time.

But why? Jonathan Chait's *The Big Con* and Mark Smith's *The Right Talk* offer two of the latest clever answers to that question. Chait is a well-known journalist who began his career at the *Prospect* before moving to *The New Republic*, where he now writes the TRB column. In his new book he insists on being counted as a "moderate" even though he rightly admits to sounding quite immoderate, even "a bit like an unhinged conspiracy theorist." The book's thesis is that "a tiny coterie of right-wing economic extremists, some of them ideological zealots, others merely greedy, a few of them possibly insane," have captured ideological control of the GOP; that their supply-side theories are the cover for the ruthless greed of K Street's lobbyists and their corporate and mega-rich clientele, who are the *real* power behind the party throne; that mainstream journalists are appallingly servile, and often complicit, when confronted with this reality; and that most leading Democrats are no better because to a great degree they also have succumbed to variants of these economists' pseudo-theories.

It's a charge, in both substance and tone, that's pitch-perfect for an era defined by right-wing radio talkers and left-wing bloggers. Yet while Chait does come across as a bit unhinged, I must admit that he doesn't sound entirely crazy. (Whether he's crazy *and* right I'll take up in a moment.)

Mark Smith is an MIT-trained political scientist who teaches at the University of Washington. As befits the author of a university-press title aimed primarily at fellow academics, he comes across as more measured and sober than Chait. But, in some ways, Smith seems just as eager to persuade us that he's the one who's decoded the enigma of Republican success. Deploying a modern version of "rhetorical analysis" built on computerized word counting and statistical regressions on polling results, he tells us a tale not of outright deceit but of subtle manipulation.

The Right Talk argues that during the last 30 years, even as Americans have become more insecure financially than they were during the previous three decades, the language and logic of the market have invaded almost every corner of society—to the right's great advantage. Contrary to Thomas Frank's claims, the right hasn't used the culture wars to conceal its real economic agenda. In fact, conservatives have pressed the economic wars harder and convinced a majority of Americans that Republicans make better managers of the material world (Smith has lots of polls to make this point).

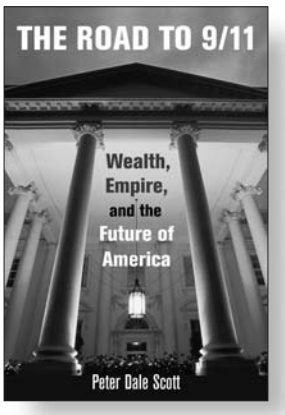
Smith's further point—important by itself—is that while Republicans shifted their rhetoric and arguments toward the logic of the market, Democrats made a different shift, to their own political disadvantage. As Smith puts it, the Republicans "changed their arguments while the Democrats changed their positions." So now the heirs to Keynes and the New Deal claim the mantle of fiscal responsibility (think Al Gore's lockboxes), while President Bush has thrown fiscal concerns to the wind.

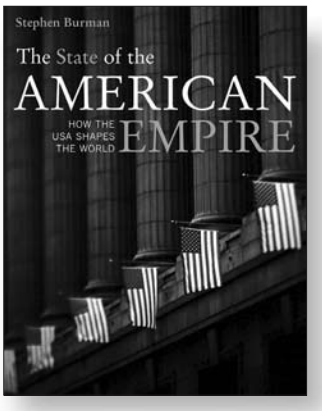
But how persuasive are these interesting arguments? *The Big Con* is a great late-night or weekend read: It's good journalism, with crisp pacing, colorful anecdotes, and deft character sketches. We aren't just told what supply-side theory is; instead, we're taken to the Washington restaurant table where Arthur Laffer first sells his dinner companions—Jude Wanniski, a young *Wall Street Journal* editorialist, and a gullible but ambitious young Nixon official named Dick Cheney—on its merits. We then get a suite-by-suite tour of K Street today so we see how lobbyists have fed—and fed off—the Republican Revolution, and how this inevitably spawned the likes of Tom "The Hammer" Delay and Jack Abramoff as go-betweens. We're also taken on a quick tour of that derelict rustbelt called the Mainstream Media and reminded once again of its willfully self-destroying insistence on objectivity (here, oddly enough, Chait barely mentions Internet journalism, a great oversight given its growth and increasing influence). There's also a particularly good chapter on the poisoned pabulum that press and politicians feed us on "the character issue" nowadays; in it Chait recounts the Washington establishment's treatment of Clinton's, Gore's, and Kerry's character "flaws"—and its reluctance to hammer at similar or greater flaws among candidates on the right, thereby allowing the right's own proto-hagiography to pass as one side of a "balanced" analysis.

Unfortunately, *The Big Con* also reminds us why a distinguished former editor of *The Economist* once insisted that journalism's first rule should be "simplify, then exaggerate." Chait too often opts for narrative pace and white hat–black hat clashes over a more useful depth. Born in the 1970s, he also has some peculiar ideas about earlier history. For example, he idealizes the 1950s as a golden age when GOP moderates

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ran the party. If only such statesman-like elites, he says (pace David Broder), would reappear, and, cooperating with their Democratic counterparts, govern us again! Well, yes and no. Under Eisenhower, spending half the federal budget on the Pentagon to fight "godless Communism" narrowed the gap between the ideological right and corporate interests and made left liberals permanent "me-tooers" on national security. And the right—think Joe McCarthy, Richard Nixon, the Birch Society—was hardly complaisant.

Chait's also dodgy on his economics. He never crisply sorts out the competing ideological groups (supply-siders versus monetarists versus old-fashioned tax cutters versus single-issue groups) in a sufficiently coherent way, and he muddies questions such as the top tax rate in the 1950s and 60s versus the 1980s and 90s because he doesn't acknowledge the difference between nominal statutory and effective marginal rates. Conservatives deliberately howled about the high statutory rates as the reason why taxes on the rich had to be cut, even though the effective rates—the ones people actually paid—were always much lower. Chait shouldn't carry the right's water.

Smith's work suffers from the absence of the panache, color, and characters that abound in Chait's book. Like Isaiah Berlin's hedgehog, Smith has One Big Point to make—that Republicans have used "economic talk" to reshape the country's political debate. In the process, Smith downplays or loses track of too many other factors in GOP successes, such as race, the culture wars, the white South's move to the GOP, globalization's toll on white male workers, and the hollowing out of the middle class.

Smith also doesn't take adequate account of other factors in the rise of the language of economics. For example, the other social sciences since the 1960s have turned toward the kind of rational-choice models favored by economists, but this isn't a result of GOP electoral efforts. Smith also doesn't adequately acknowledge the complex character of the Democratic Party, which was never

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simply a liberal party and has always had elements of both business and ideological conservatism. The Democrats after McGovern's ignominious loss in 1972 "changed their arguments" to become more market oriented partly because so many Democratic leaders and voters believed in those market-oriented policies.

Both *The Big Con* and *The Right Talk* are worth reading as provocations to greater clarity about the still unanswered question of why Republicans keep winning. Nothing foreseeable about the 2008 elections promises the kind of breakout that 1932 or 1964 represented in modern liberalism's history. In an America (and a world) of heightened material inequality, increasing environmental damage, damaged public institutions, and even more damaged trust in those institutions, perhaps the proper reframing of the question I posed at the outset is why Republican values, ideology, and institutions keep winning, regardless of whether Republicans or Democrats hold power. That, sadly, is of a scale and scope for which neither of these intelligent but ultimately insufficient books can give us meaningful guidance. **TAP**

Richard Parker *is the author of* John Kenneth Galbraith: His Life, His Politics, His Economics. *He teaches at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government.*

BOOKS

SHIFT HAPPENS

OVERTREATED: WHY TOO MUCH MEDICINE IS MAKING US SICKER AND POORER BY SHANNON BROWNLEE, Bloomsbury, 343 pages, $25.95

SICK: THE UNTOLD STORY OF AMERICA'S HEALTH CARE CRISIS
BY JONATHAN COHN, HarperCollins, 302 pages, $25.95

A SECOND OPINION: RESCUING AMERICA'S HEALTH CARE
BY ARNOLD S. RELMAN, Public Affairs, 205 pages, $24.00

BY JERRY AVORN

The problem is that most of us are healthy most of the time. At least, that's the problem if you want to change the health-care system. In any given year the average American isn't likely to come face-to-face with the worst that system has to offer. And those who confront its limitations most often—the chronically ill and the uninsured—also happen to be among the most powerless groups in the electorate. Meanwhile, the economic burdens grow each year: Medical goods and services become ever more expensive, and employers and insurers shift more costs to patients.

It's not as if we haven't had a series of attempts at reform, but the pull of medicine for profit has distorted nearly all of them. Health maintenance organizations (HMOs) had noble origins in the mid-20th century as an innovative means of providing comprehensive and integrated coverage through nonprofit organizations such as the Group Health Cooperative of Puget Sound and Kaiser Permanente. In the mid-1970s, innovative primary-care residency programs developed (I trained in one of them) to turn out a new breed of doctors who would focus on appropriate and effective care in a new patient-centered world. Besides immersing us in the traditional arcana of acute hospital treatment, we also learned how to care for ambulatory patients as well. It seemed then as if the front-line practitioner—the patient's ally, the steward of the system—would move up from the bottom of the health-care hierarchy to assume a long-denied position of centrality and authority.

That noble vision lasted for just a few years. Corporate insurers took over, with a business model based on avoiding sick patients and limiting what was provided to those who did get covered—turning the once-idealistic concept of the HMO into a reviled epithet. The old general practitioner, who had become a "primary care doctor," now became a "gatekeeper," as physicians were enlisted in insurance companies' attempts to reduce their medical loss ratios—what the rest of us call taking care of sick people.

These new books examine this sordid transition from three perspectives. Shannon Brownlee's *Overtreated* provides a welcome antidote to the narrow view that simply finding enough money to buy health insurance for all the uninsured would solve our health-care crisis. She reminds us that entrepreneurial medicine often drives physicians and other providers to do too much to patients, which can be bad for their health as well as for everyone's wallet. Doctors order costly imaging studies like MRIs and CAT scans when a careful history and physical exam would do. They administer courses of toxic chemotherapy (which account for over half the revenues of many oncology practices) to dying cancer patients in the absence of evidence that it will help. They manage heart disease with invasive procedures when much simpler regimens would work as well.

As Brownlee points out, the culprit here is not just the for-profit free-for-all that American medicine has become. Patients often demand the fanciest technology for its own sake, and physicians sometimes prefer to provide the newest and most complex treatments because they want to do everything possible for their patients. But these desires alone cannot explain the irrational technological exuberance of U.S. health care. Physicians in other advanced nations want to be on the cutting edge, too, and patients everywhere want the best care available. What is distinctive about our system is that it provides economic incentives that encourage doing the most expensive thing all the time to everyone who can pay for it or have it paid for. In most settings, there is little pressure to consider costs, and much reason for physicians, patients, and other decision-makers to maximize expenditures. In the effort to

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prevent unnecessary expenses, we have introduced new layers of care deniers, who sometimes deny coverage even for appropriate services. And so the world's most expensive health-care system paradoxically provides a great deal of medical care that isn't needed, while people who lack coverage cannot get even the most basic services. *Overtreated* is a must-read for all those (and there are many) whose main concept of "fixing the health-care system" is buying Blue Shield or Medicare for everyone.

Sick, by Jonathan Cohn, focuses instead on those for whom the glass is less than half-empty, following nine patients in their often-bloody confrontations with American health care and health insurance. Near Boston, a middle-aged woman with heart disease dies when an emergency room goes "on divert" because of overcrowding, forcing her to another institution that can't provide the care she requires. In Florida, an office worker is denied medical insurance because she has diabetes. A California security guard has a stroke that might have been prevented if he had been able to afford treatment for his chronic illnesses.

These are more than depressing horror stories (or train wrecks, as physicians sometimes call such cases). After engaging the reader in these gut-wrenching personal histories, Cohn skillfully uses each well-researched vignette to illustrate just how health care in America so often goes off the rails. It is as if each case is subjected to a careful systems autopsy to demonstrate just how a lesion here, a deficiency there, an inbred vulnerability throughout, came together almost inevitably to generate these human disasters. He also backs his reporting with a solid presentation of otherwise esoteric health-policy data and theory.

Despite his excellent diagnostic acumen, Cohn does less well with therapeutic recommendations. A short final chapter on policy options confuses government-provided health insurance with direct government provision of medical services, an error that still bedevils much progressive debate about where to go next (Britain is not Canada). But as a compelling, authoritative analysis of what's wrong, how we got there, and what our system is doing to our fellow citizens, Cohn's eminently readable book will draw even the most jaded observer into a useful state of coherent fury. Think *Arrowsmith* meets *SiCKO* meets *The New England Journal of Medicine*.

The editor emeritus of that journal, Arnold Relman, has produced a book that is likely the most concise and best analysis of the American health-care debacle now available. A distinguished academic and clinician with extensive experience in several aspects of medicine and broad interdisciplinary acumen, Relman gets right to the point in *A Second Opinion*. He describes how we ended up commercializing nearly all of medicine, the harm caused by that shift, and how to fix it. Most current policy proposals deal with finance but say little about the organization of medical care. Relman puts the organizational issues back in the center, insisting that we need nonprofit groups of practitioners working in integrated systems, efficiently sharing information, and coordinating resources for the benefit of the patient. Such systems would be more likely to provide high-quality care in an affordable manner instead of gaming the system to maximize reimbursements and stinting on unprofitable services.

Paradoxically, our system provides a lot of medical care that isn't needed, while people who lack coverage cannot get even the most basic services.

This theme, presented so cogently in *A Second Opinion*, is the missing element in most popular discussions of health reform. The main problem we face is not how to buy more health insurance for the uninsured. It's about how to organize health care so that it works better and doesn't cost at least 50 percent more per capita in the United States than in the rest of the industrialized world, especially because we get only average medical outcomes for the additional expenditure. As Relman and others suggest, restructuring care to provide evidence-based, patient-centered, comprehensive services through nonprofit integrated delivery systems is the key to an effective and affordable system.

Relman, who coined the term "medical-industrial complex" in a seminal 1980 *New England Journal* article, has spent nearly his whole medical life (which dates back to 1946) in the part of the system generously called nonprofit. As a result, he is particularly acute in pointing out that even some of our most esteemed academic and community institutions have learned to emulate their corporate brothers in adopting business strategies that evoke Halliburton more than Hippocrates.

Three chapters of *A Second Opinion* are particularly welcome. In one, Relman demolishes the currently trendy consumer-driven health-care movement and its much hyped individual health savings accounts. Under the guise of patient empowerment, this vicious little idea further erodes what is left of the medical safety net by encouraging the healthy to spend as little as possible on health insurance and to pocket the difference. He points out a fact that marketplace aficionados usually don't understand: Expecting consumers to drive up quality and push down costs by making smarter medical-care purchasing decisions reveals a dismal understanding of the (often absent) information that would be needed to guide such choices, and also makes the fatal assumption (perhaps literally) that consumers can evaluate a surgical procedure or a medication as if it were analogous to a new car that they might test drive around the block.

Relman also addresses The Canada Syndrome head-on by discussing just what works well and what (face it) works badly in the much-debated system to our north. He points out the folly of shutting down discussions about universal coverage with condescending references to

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all those long waiting lines in Toronto and Montreal. Yes, there is more waiting in Canada for some elective procedures than well-insured patients have to endure in the United States—but not for acute care, emergency care, or primary care. And in the United States, a wait can be infinitely long if you don't have coverage. Relman's analysis reminds us that our health-policy goal needn't be the system that Canada, or Great Britain, or even France has. All we have to do is try and develop a much better version of American health care.

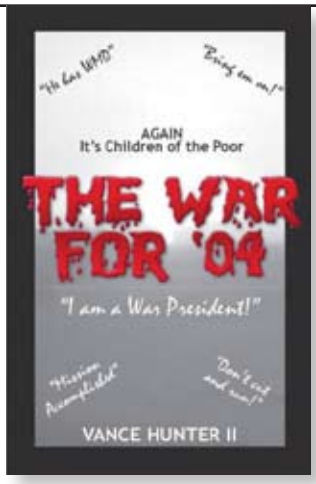
The book's final chapter, "An Open Letter to My Colleagues in the Medical Profession," is a doctor-to-doctor chalk talk that's well worth the attention of non-physicians as well. The system isn't working for us or for our patients, Relman reminds us. Some of us are getting very rich, but most of us are being nibbled to death by restrictions on what we can do for our patients, and inundated with mindless billing forms and administrative garbage. We find our professional lives increasingly distorted by commercial pressures that distract us from the compassion and scientific rigor that initially drew us into this calling. Relman calls on his professional brethren to lead the fight for a kind of universal coverage that is centered on clinicians serving patients.

Although his appeal to physicians is not directed in the same way toward patients, Relman might have made a similar case to them. You wanted lower costs, he might say, you wanted to keep all your options open, you wanted government out of the picture. Here is where we've ended up in 2007. Is this really what you wanted?

As these books remind us, the American health-care system may finally be imploding from the weight of its unsustainable cost, intolerable inequity, and (on average) mediocre outcomes. As a disclaimer, I've been expecting that since about 1970. But shift happens. What may really drive change now is the increasingly common strategy of insurers, employers, and government to transfer more and more costs of care onto the shoulders of patients through higher co-payments and deductibles, or termination of coverage altogether. This trend may kick-start a new movement for reform much as the draft galvanized opposition to the Vietnam War in the 1960s. Most people aren't propelled into action over abstract issues of distributive justice or rational policy. But when you lose your health insurance because your company ends its coverage, or your spouse can't afford the medicines her doctor prescribed, or your kid can't get a necessary surgical procedure, arcane policy choices jump to life, as they did for the patients in Cohn's book. With these books, an aroused citizenry (remember them?) will have three good manuals to carry into battle. **TAP**

Jerry Avorn *is a professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School and author of* Powerful Medicines: The Benefits, Risks, and Costs of Prescription Drugs.





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BOOKS

STANDARD ERROR

TOUGH LIBERAL: ALBERT SHANKER AND THE BATTLES OVER SCHOOLS, UNIONS, RACE, AND DEMOCRACY BY RICHARD D. KAHLENBERG
Columbia University Press, 524 pages, $29.95

TESTED: ONE AMERICAN SCHOOL STRUGGLES TO MAKE THE GRADE
BY LINDA PERLSTEIN, Henry Holt and Company, 302 pages, $25.00

BY JAL MEHTA

The educational standards movement has made strange bedfellows. Its staunchest champion has been a conservative Republican president who is proudly incurious and anti-intellectual, but the movement has also attracted support from many Democrats and advocates of minority rights who want to use testing to hold schools accountable and advance equality in education. The passage of No Child Left Behind (NCLB)—the 2001 law aimed at reducing the educational achievement gap—is the movement's major accomplishment and George W. Bush's principal legacy in domestic policy. As Bush's presidency comes to a close, it is an apt time to ask whether NCLB has been a good thing for education.

There was probably no stranger bedfellow in the educational standards movement than Albert Shanker, the longtime president of the American Federation of Teachers, who died in 1997 at the age of 69. Early in his career, when Shanker led the teachers in New York City, he saw himself as building a union. "I don't represent children. I represent the teachers," he said in the aftermath of a 1968 teacher strike. But in later years he modified his position and became a prominent advocate for school reform.

Richard Kahlenberg's excellent new biography of Shanker, *Tough Liberal*, portrays him as a social democrat who upheld an older New Deal tradition against the liberalism and "new politics" of the 1960s. Shanker defended public education and fought against economic inequality in domestic politics, while favoring a hawkish position in international relations. This combination alienated liberals on foreign policy and conservatives on domestic policy, but Kahlenberg sees in Shanker an intellectually consistent kindred soul. Like Shanker, Kahlenberg opposes identity politics and race-based affirmative action, instead favoring a coalition on the lines of the New Deal that links the poor and the middle class behind a vision of expanded governmental responsibility. For Shanker, in this telling, the educational standards and accountability movement was an effort to realize the promise of public education for all.



Teacher Man: Albert Shanker at a rally at New York City Hall, 1968

BETTMANN / CORBIS

A key moment in Shanker's transformation on school reform came in 1983, when he embraced the findings of *A Nation at Risk*, a report sponsored by Ronald Reagan's Department of Education, which claimed there was a "rising tide of mediocrity" in America's schools and that the United States would lose its international economic standing if it did not improve its educational performance. What teachers needed to do, Shanker argued, was not deny the problem but professionalize their practice along the lines of law or medicine, collectively taking responsibility for their students' results. If they did not, he argued, they would find themselves subject to increasing degrees of external control.

Shanker's analysis was prophetic, but he left a dual legacy. Shanker and his union, the American Federation of Teachers, gave the standards movement critical support that helped pave the way to reform, but he also identified the dangers that external accountability might create. And those dangers have become much more apparent since the standards movement won the enactment of NCLB.

How NCLB has affected education is the subject of Linda Perlstein's book, *Tested*, which chronicles the efforts of an elementary school in a high-poverty neighborhood to comply with the law. Perlstein, a *Washington Post* reporter, spent a year at the school—Tyler Heights in Annapolis, Maryland—visiting classrooms, talking with students and teachers, and tracking the remarkable efforts of the school's principal, Tina McKnight. In a field that is dominated by ideological polemics and dry academic studies, Perlstein has written a vivid, carefully documented, and even suspenseful book—Will Tyler Heights make the federal grade?—that offers the general reader and scholar alike an engaging, if often grim, portrait of life under NCLB. Unlike most educational policy researchers, who emphasize the scientifically quantifiable, Perlstein's writing also reflects a humanistic sensibility and concern for the ultimate purposes of education.

Perlstein picked Tyler Heights because it has been a No Child Left Behind success story that has been written up in local papers. In the three years before Perlstein arrived at the school, the proportion of third graders passing the Maryland School Assessment (MSA) rose from 35 percent to 90 percent. And as Perlstein's year at the school unfolds,

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we see why its students have succeeded. Tyler Heights spends virtually every minute of its time, from the first day of school to the day of the test in March, trying to boost test scores.

For example, by the time the students take the MSA, they have written thousands of "BCRs," brief constructed responses similar to those on the test, following a specific formula devised by the teachers (borrow from the question, answer the question, find support from the text, and so on). The MSA asks what makes something a poem, so students spend hours writing such passages as "I know 'Smart' is a poem because it has stanzas and rhyme. I know the text has stanzas and not paragraphs because they didn't indent." The test asks what features make it easy for third graders to read the text, so they learn to write, "The text features that make it easy for third graders to read are font size, bold print, and numbering."

Tyler Heights tried every available strategy that could potentially raise students' scores. It standardized much of the instruction by its teachers. Interim assessments tracked students' performance and were entered into spreadsheets and discussed at teacher meetings. In the months leading up to the test, virtually all of the time previously spent on science and social studies was devoted to reading and math. The school postponed field trips, class projects, labs, and anything else—including a celebration of Dr. Seuss' birthday—that could detract from test prep. MSA tips were posted on lockers. Students sang songs about their readiness for the MSAs at assemblies. Immediately before taking the tests, students went through a bizarre relaxation ritual of caressing their earlobes, rubbing their bellies and collarbones, drinking water, chanting, and eating a "Pep-O-Mint," a practice supposedly grounded in research.

Perlstein's description of Tyler Heights poses significant challenges to backers of NCLB, especially to Democrats and civil-rights advocates who supported it precisely for what they hoped it would do for schools in low-income communities. It is hard to see how anyone who cares about education could be in favor of what has happened at Tyler Heights. All the efforts to prepare students for testing not only narrowed the curriculum but also eliminated (against the better judgment of the teachers) virtually any kind of activity that could potentially interest children in schooling. There is also no good evidence that students learned much more than what is on the state tests. National studies suggest that while state scores have risen, these gains do not necessarily correlate with performance on the National Assessment of Educational Progress, the most respected independent barometer of student skills. Tyler Heights is only one school—and one likely at the high end of the test prep continuum—but its supposed success under NCLB should make even the law's most ardent supporters worry about how it is distorting education.

Tested suggests that the failings of No

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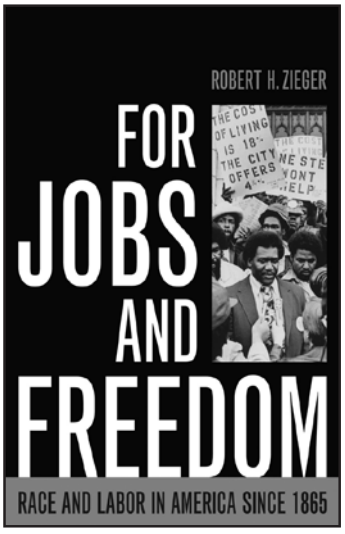
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Child Left Behind are in its conception and not its implementation. The principal and teachers at Tyler Heights are doing exactly what the legislators have asked of them. NCLB reflects a peculiar mix of high aspirations for equity, limited means to reach those aspirations, and a legislative determination to compel progress by tightly monitoring school results from afar. And the kind of test-centered schooling offered at Tyler Heights is what that combination produces.

The failings of No Child Left Behind are in its conception, not its implementation. Tyler Heights is doing exactly what the legislators have asked.

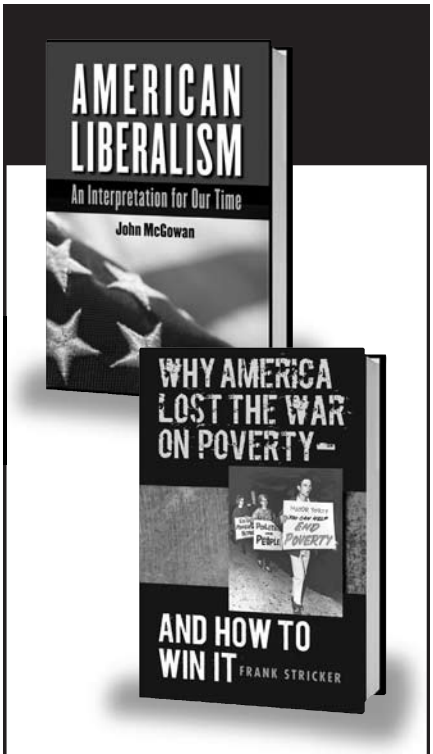
What might better avenues for reform look like? Proposals that have been floated to mend No Child Left Behind could address some of the problems evident at Tyler Heights. "Growth models" that measure the gains of individual students over time would be a fairer way of measuring student progress. Multiple ways to evaluate school progress might reduce the incessant emphasis on testing. And the use of better tests and portfolios of student work to measure performance are clearly needed if external assessment remains a central part of the reform strategy.

But even if all these changes are made, there is little reason to think they would be enough to deal with problems as serious as the ones that Perlstein describes. Most students at Tyler Heights have little academic support at home and little sense of why they go to school, and they see few examples in their communities of what education might eventually do for them. For these children to go to college on an equal footing with middle-class children whose parents provide them with every advantage would be an extraordinary feat, and there is no reason to think that it can be accomplished through ordinary means. Even to approach equality in education would require far more intensive measures than the revisions to NCLB propose. Those measures would include attracting talented teachers and principals who incorporate (but are not controlled by) research-based practices; differentiated instruction matched to the needs of students; individual tutoring for students who need remedial help; and psychological counseling to deal with trauma stemming from events outside of school. And there would need to be significantly more time spent learning: Some charter schools that are trying to bring children up to grade level run school from 8 A.M. to 5 P.M. during the week, plus Saturday mornings and a month in the summer.

The obstacles to this kind of intervention are many—the cost, the difficulty of attracting talented people to a currently low-paying and low-status field, and union opposition to longer school days and years—but that is what it will take if we are really serious about leaving no child behind.

And if we are serious about education's ultimate purposes, we ought to remember that school has to engage students' imaginations. In contrast to the dismal picture of test prep at Tyler Heights, Perlstein briefly visits Crofton Elementary, a suburban school 14 miles away, where she finds the children creating fairy tales on the computer, giving speeches on Olympic sports, making tortilla teepees, and questioning visiting Anne Arundel county officials during a unit on politics. Now there is no reason to think that Tyler Heights looked like Crofton Elementary even before NCLB, nor is it possible for children to write fairy tales until they can construct sentences. But Crofton's approach is a better model than a test-prep training program. When legislators meet to think about the next round of reform, they would do well to think more about Crofton Elementary and less about how to create ever more refined accountability systems. **TAP**

***Jal Mehta** is currently a post-doctoral fellow at the Harvard Graduate School of Education.*



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When We Get Behind the Wheel

BY THOMAS GEOGHEGAN

AS GOP SENATORS DROP OUT, THE WILD HOPE GROWS: Could the Democrats get a filibuster-proof Senate? If so, and if the party took the White House and kept the House, then at last the progressives would have the keys to the car. This would not be like 1992, but more like 1964.

Of course it's wrong—too early—to indulge in such fantasy. But if it does happen, here are three cautions I would give:

1. Make catastrophe bipartisan. Let's be like the British in both World War I and World War II, and in foreign policy have a government of national unity. Make James Baker secretary of state. Make Chuck Hagel secretary of defense. "What?!" you say. Well, at least for the first two years—at least during the withdrawal from Iraq—I'd be glad to see a few reality-based Republicans in charge. In fact, if we had a parliamentary system, I think something like this would have happened just before the 2006 elections. The Bush government would have fallen. A government of national unity would have taken its place. Of course, the U.S. Constitution does not permit this kind of eve-of-Dunkirk rearrangement of the deck chairs, but FDR knew how to bring in Stimson-type Republicans, and our generation should, too. This bipartisan arrangement would limit the risk that in a few years, the Republicans would accuse the Democrats (as the Nazis accused Weimar's Social Democrats) of a "stab in the back" to our armed forces.

"But Baker? How could you agree to him? He put Bush in the White House in Florida." Precisely. If he could fix a Bush victory in Florida, he might be able to pull off some acceptable conclusion to Iraq.

In some ways, we'd have the best of both worlds. On foreign policy, and only there, we'd have a government of national unity. On domestic policy, we could go all out to the left. But here, too, I'd have some cautions.

2. Keep it simple, stupid. If we win a 1960s-type majority, let's simply re-enact the two great laws of the 1960s. First, we should "re-enact" Medicare—for everyone. We should take our single-payer health-care system and just make it wall to wall. Aside from its merits, people also understand it, while they don't really understand any of the health-care plans. One thing that Ronald Reagan proved is that people like big, simple ideas: In his era, the big simple idea was tax cuts, and in ours, the big simple idea should be "Medicare for all adults," and "national coverage of children, too." (I know it comes out to the same thing, but since single-payer is a big pill to swallow, it's nice to cut it in two.) Above all, keep it simple. The Democrats seem to specialize in coming up with health-care plans that only Paul Krugman can understand. And so far as I can tell, even Paul Krugman wants to keep it simple.

Make catastrophe bipartisan. Have a national unity government for foreign policy. Make James Baker secretary of state.

Every increment of complexity, every compromise in the Medicare principle, will make a bill harder to pass. Reagan kept things simple; why can't we?

3. Build in redundancy. Of course, the other great 1960s law was the Civil Rights Act, and we should extend this law, too. I mean not to prohibit just race- and sex- and now age- and handicap-discrimination, but discrimination in employment based on union membership or support. I know that the AFL-CIO and Change to Win have their own version of labor law reform, the Employee Free Choice Act. For liberals not familiar with the Employee Free Choice Act (and they are legion), the idea is simple: Have card checks instead of elections, and speed up what the National Labor Relations Board is doing. Indeed, not just speed up the NLRB but prod it to do more—help negotiate first contracts, that sort of thing. All of this is fine. I'm a labor lawyer and I support it. Let's enact it. But it has major flaws. First, it will require years of rule making, which will end up in endless legal challenges. The courts won't like or understand it. Second, it creates a kind of bottleneck, in that a labor revival still has to "go through the government."

If we re-enact the Civil Rights Act, we have a model the courts already understand. If employers fire pro-union workers, those workers can go into court, and get damages, an injunction, and legal fees. With discovery, pro-union workers can get access to corporate files. We should exempt employers from these suits only if there is a labor agreement in place.

That's my plan, but—WAIT! Let's wake up. Back to work. Bush is still in power. It's not even 2008. TAP

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